

**HOW TO UNDERSTAND
THE
WORDS OF CHRIST**

**A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR
TEACHERS AND BIBLE STUDENTS**



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HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE WORDS OF CHRIST

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR
TEACHERS AND BIBLE STUDENTS

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PREFACE.

THIS Handbook is a twin volume to "How to Study the Life of Christ." Like that volume it has grown out of the author's many years of happy work with young men.

With devout thankfulness for the kindly and continued welcome given the former volume, this book is sent forth with the earnest prayer that it also may prove a helpful guide to all who sincerely desire to understand the words of Him, who is our Light, our Way, and our Truth.

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How to Understand the Words of Christ.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

EVERYONE who says "I am a Christian," confesses his faith in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Christians are in perfect agreement as to the Person of Jesus Christ, His human and divine nature, the historic facts of His incarnation, ministry, and death. And (what is more important) all Christians are in essential agreement as to the spiritual significance of His life and death. It is only when they attempt to explain the teaching of Christ, that they begin to disagree, and to contradict.

The Source of Christian Dis-unity is not in the words of Christ, but in our interpretation of them. It is easy for us to agree in saying, Every word spoken by Christ is a word of divine truth, is our light, and our inspiration. But the real question, the one which creates and perpetuates our unchristian divisions, is left untouched. For that question is: What does Christ teach? What is the true meaning of His words?

The sword that has sundered the unity of Christ's people in the past, and is dividing His people to-day, is not "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," but the

sword of doctrinal interpretation, which is the word of man. If Christians were as united on the Master's teaching as they are on His life, the whole world would be conquered for Christ before the close of the present century.

The Discovery of Truth is always Difficult. This applies both to physical and spiritual truth. We are familiar with controversies over what is truth in art and science, in education, ethics, and medicine. It would be very strange if men who cannot agree about earthly knowledge, should have no difficulty in finding heavenly truth. It would be much more strange if the man who did not desire to know the truth should find it. The source of our difficulty is twofold. It is found in the method by which truth is revealed, and still more in the mind that is seeking it; or (more is the pity) seeking to avoid it.

Difficulties from the Method of Revelation. The Gospels are brief. At best they are only an outline, the bare essentials of the Master's teaching. They took form under conditions which made a record of details and particulars impossible; and this was the will of the Master. Christ never committed His teachings to writing. He never sought to give them a fixed verbal form. His most wonderful sayings were often uttered to some wayside questioner. His inimitable parables were spoken to small groups of common-folk by the seaside. Had He purposed to formulate rules for daily conduct, or a system of religious philosophy, or to answer the problems of ethical speculation, He would have chosen a very different method of instruction. The Master's aim was to print His Gospel upon the hearts of His disciples, to inspire their lives by making them partakers of the living truth, i. e. Himself. This could not be done by the method of the Scribes or Rabbis.

Ignoring Historical Conditions. The Master's words were spoken to oriental ears, His striking comparisons were drawn from oriental life. His vivid pictures, and paradoxical sayings were addressed to oriental minds. His method of teaching was perfectly adapted to His hearers. But to our occidental minds they present many a difficulty which can be removed only by careful study. Remember also that what the Oriental received was a living picture of truth. Too often you and I see only black letters on a printed page. Naturally the reader (more than the hearer) thinks overmuch of words and phrases, and too little of the great historic truth behind them. But the same word often stands for different ideas in different lands, even at different historic periods in the same land. If, for example, one reads *The Light of Asia* thinking that such words as "righteousness," "purity," "sin," "death," "heaven" stand for the same ideas that they do in Christian lands he is only enjoying a delightful delusion. In the Bible itself such words occurring in the Old Testament do not express the identical meaning that they do in the Gospels, nor did they convey to the Hebrew the measure of spiritual truth they convey to us.

Again, some earnest readers of the Gospel seem to think that the Jewish Church ended when the ministry of Christ began, and that the men to whom the Master spoke had the same religious ideas and spiritual standards that we have to-day. The facts are just the opposite. There was no Christian Church either at the beginning or end of the period covered by the Gospels. In all the multitude that listened to the words of the Master there was not one Christian man or woman. There was not one able to understand His spiritual teaching in the same measure that

you and I can understand it. The Christian Church came into being with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles at Pentecost. During the whole period of our Lord's teaching there was but one Christian on the earth, the man Christ Jesus. These facts had much to do with shaping the Master's words and the methods of His teaching.

The Limitations of Language must also be taken into account. Every advance in human knowledge demands new words in which to accurately express new facts. Science is adding thousands of words to the English language every few years. The new terminology of one science alone, fills an octavo dictionary. Electricians were compelled to coin these new words in order to accurately communicate their discoveries to the world. Yet when Jesus Christ came to earth with a revelation from God, He was compelled to speak in the earth-bound language of man. It is because He was bound by the limitations of human knowledge that He is constantly telling His hearers what His Father is "like." What the Kingdom of Heaven is "like," what the Holy Spirit is "like." In limited human speech it was impossible for Him to convey to man all that God is, or all that spiritual realities are. Do you always remember this as you study His words?

Moreover, human speech never conveys to human ears all that it stands for in the mind of the speaker. And this basic principle governs your understanding or misunderstanding of this page, and this book. The truth, exactly as it stands in my mind, cannot be transferred to the mind of another. No matter what words I select they will not mean to you exactly what they mean to me; and therefore they cannot convey to you the exact idea in my mind.

If your experience in the study of man and truth is larger than mine, then you will pass over the inadequateness of my words, and grasp a truth larger than mine. If your experience is more limited than mine, then to you my words will convey less than I am trying to express. In every case each reader will receive what he has educated himself to receive.

It is impossible that the words of life spoken by Christ should convey to His hearers the whole truth. No two hearers ever received exactly the same truth, or the same amount of truth. That hearer received the most of the divine message whose own life was lived on a plane nearest to that on which Christ lived. The particular part of the truth which each hearer received was decided by his own mind and heart. (Study S. Jn. 12: 23-30.)

Ignoring the purpose of Christ. Christ taught for all men in all ages. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." All men included all those to whom He was speaking. Naturally they asked Him to explain His principles, and apply His words to the problems of their own lives. He did so. But these words, so helpful to the men of His own age, are the stumbling-blocks of men to-day. Why? Because we ignore the difference between a *principle* of action, and a rule of action; between *unchanging* truth, and its temporary, local, or individual application. Because Christ said to one particular man who needed it, Give all you possess to the poor, some have taught that every man must do the same.

The Gospels record Christ's principles of life. These principles if honestly and sincerely studied will teach us, amid the ever changing conditions of human life, to form such personal rules of conduct as will enable us to walk in

His footsteps. But the spiritually lazy man wants something easier. He seeks exact rules of conduct for every possible, or imaginary situation of life. The Gospel of the Kingdom is not a pocket dictionary of ethical rules for deciding the right or wrong of—"Backgammon," "Billiards," "Cards," "Church Fairs," "Dancing," "Free Trade," "Golf," "Grab Bags," "Operas," "Prohibition," "Theatergoing," and "Woman's Suffrage."

Even more blinding to one who would know the freedom of truth, is the practice of treating the Gospel record as if it were an astrologer's dreambook or a fortune-teller's oracle. Yet some try to decide the problems of life by a chance opening of the Gospels. The first word to meet their gaze being accepted as a heaven-sent message. Shall I speak to one who has injured me? The chance opening of the inspired record reads, "I know not the man!" I am ill, shall I attend church? The Gospel falls open at "That I may go and worship Him." I am asked to read a certain book, shall I? The eye chances to see "This man blasphemeth,"; and the seeker acts according to the chance vision. Yet the first text is the inspired record of a lie, the second records the hypocritical words of a murderer, and the third text records a blasphemous contradiction of Christ.

The purpose of Christ was not to utter oracular formulas for the superstitious, rigid rules for the spiritually indolent, nor theological dogmas for the intellectually pugnacious. The supreme purpose of the Divine Teacher was to inspire the heart, and quicken the spiritual life of man. It is ours to hear, read, mark, learn, and spiritually understand the words of Christ, and this we cannot do unless we give them intelligent and prayerful study.

The Greatest Difficulty of all arises not from the method of revelation, the language of the Master nor the nature of truth; it arises from the *nature of man*. The difficulties in the Gospel are not to be compared with the difficulties to be found in the mind of its readers. Our greatest stumbling-block is ourselves, our own uneducated minds or (what is worse) perverse hearts. The untrained reader does not realize that what we call "words" are only arbitrary sounds, or printed symbols. Whatever a word means to him to-day, he vainly supposes it meant in Christ's day. He cannot picture civil, social, or religious conditions different from his own; and so unconsciously reads into the Gospel the religious conditions of to-day. Yet the unlearned if he reads with an honest and prayerful heart, comparing Scripture with Scripture, will gradually educate himself to understand spiritually, and so get at the heart of Christ's teaching in a way that puts to shame the educated but perverse student. It is one of the striking facts of the Gospel story that the ignorant penitents of Christ's day understood His words better than the learned Scribes or the self-satisfied Pharisees.

The open mind and the receptive heart is the best of all aids in Bible study. Dr. Jewett, Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford (and author of several commentaries), says—"Anyone who would learn the sacred writings by heart, and paraphrase them in English, would probably make a nearer approach to their true meaning than he would gather from any commentary." A young truth-seeker asked the President of Magdalen College, Oxford, for direction in study. The aged theologian (over ninety), after silent thought, said: "Were I you, sir, I would first of all read the Gospel of St. Matthew (silence). Then the Gospel of St.

Mark (pause). Then go on to St. Luke (longer silence). Then I would certainly read the Gospel according to St. John."

Another trainer of Bible students, the President of Crozer Theological Seminary, said to a teacher trainer: "Get your students to study less *about* the Bible, and to take the Book as its own best interpreter, its best explanation, its best argument, its best defence. I have been studying it constantly these seventy years, and teaching it almost as long. Give me all the commentaries that have been written in English, and I will take my one hour with the Bible alone, in preference to the rest of the day with commentaries and helps." My own thirty years' experience as teacher, teacher trainer, and theological professor, moves me to add, —these testimonies are true.

It is the ignorant reader who thinks himself wise, that becomes a blind leader of the blind. I recall a Bible teacher (?) I chanced to hear interpret a passage in a manner that offended her better read hearers. On their appealing to me, I mildly suggested that other passages of Holy Scripture on the same subject should be taken into account. I was quickly silenced by, "I have studied this question for years, and have received a special revelation on the subject." When honest ignorance sincerely believes that its errors are a revelation from God, no human power can enlighten it.

Unconscious bias often blinds us to the meaning of Christ's words. We think we are carefully studying and applying our best judgment to Holy Scripture, when in fact we are being led by some obscure personal motive, or prejudice. It is not easy to discover the truth. The path is full of difficulties most of which are older than we are. The man who does not sincerely desire to know the truth certainly

will never find it. If we are conscious that we are being led by our prejudices, and are too proud to confess, and correct our fault, then the situation develops a serious moral responsibility.

There are no perversions of Holy Scripture worse than those which are the fruit of self-interest, partisanship, or sectarian pride. The man who wills to see in Holy Scripture only what he wants to see, and tries to make others see only what he desires them to see, is an immoral man, and a perverter of God's Word. But far short of this it is ours to stop and ask ourselves, "Am I studying the Gospels to find out what they teach, or what I want them to teach?"

To sum up all we have said: The main difficulty in understanding the words of Christ comes from the self we bring to His teaching. We may earnestly desire to know the truth, yet some of us find it hard to believe that any interpretation can be correct if it contradicts our personal opinions, or our own pet theories. In other words the discovery of truth is made difficult just in proportion as the factor of self-interest becomes a part of it. Plainly then our success or failure in the discovery of the truth is decided by the factor of self. If I love myself more than I love the truth I shall not find it. If I allow self in any measure to become my standard of truth I shall in that same measure fail to discover it.

Someone, however, may ask, if the principle be correct that we are obliged to interpret what we see and what we hear by our own experience, how will it ever be possible for us to discover the truth? By getting away from our own selfish experience, by entering into a larger, more generous, and more loving experience, by losing ourselves in that higher and nobler Self which is not our own. "Repent

ye, and believe the Gospel.” For many men a change of mind and heart, the renouncing of selfish desire and selfish purpose *must precede* the discovery of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

No one can find all that there is in any book simply by reading it. This is superlatively true of a book based on the Gospels. The reader who carefully and prayerfully studies the words of Our Lord, using this volume only as a guide, will obtain fourfold the benefit that comes to a mere reader. I do not desire you to accept my interpretation of any word of Christ. I do most devoutly desire that you obey the admonition of the Divine Teacher:—“Search the Scriptures, for * * they are they which testify of Me.”

Read carefully St. John 18:28-38. Study each word of Christ in vss. 36-38. What does Christ claim is His relation to the truth?

Is Truth to be said, or done? *Study* St. John 3:21. 8:12-18. 8:42-47. 14:6. Make notes of what you have learned of Christ's *relation to Truth*.

CHAPTER II.

OUR LORD'S ANSWER.

“WHAT is Truth?” The man who asked that question stood face to face with Jesus Christ. He was a man of the world, a keen politician, a powerful Governor, and it was his knowledge of his own world and his own associates, that caused him to make his question a hopeless sneer, and to turn his back upon the Christ without an answer. Yet, what is equally significant, although he was sure that “truth” was a sham, and the cloak of cowards, nevertheless he believed in the sincerity of the man before him and tried to save Him from being murdered by self-righteous hypocrites.

Are we prepared to answer Pilate's question? Can a paragraph answer it? Or a chapter, or a volume, or even a library? Think you that if the Christ could have answered the Roman Governor's question with words (few or many) He would have given his whole life to its revelation? The answer of Pilate's question is too large to be contained in any verbal statement. Truth is not found in written rules but in living principles. Truth is not a formula but a life. Men have attempted to put into a few words the truth which God's Son spent thirty years in revealing,—and then left to be completed by the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, before we begin our study of the words of the Master, we must have a standard of truth by which to interpret them, one that shall satisfy our own conscience and appeal to our pupils as reasonable. Such a standard cannot

be found in ourselves. We are convinced that the intrusion of self is the factor mainly responsible for the misinterpretations which have divided the Body of Christ.

What is the Universal Test of Truth? By what do we measure the words of the merchant, the neighbor, or the friend? Is it not by his deeds? And if what he says, and what he does are not the same, are we not quick to note it, and to withdraw our confidence? And will any reiteration of statement, or positiveness of assertion restore our confidence so long as the man's words and deeds fail to agree? "Actions speak louder than words." We measure every man's words by his deeds. Jesus of Nazareth was a man among men. He claimed no exception from the moral obligations of men. As they measured the words of others so He expected them to measure His words. Nay, more, as they measured other men so He demanded to be measured by them. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not."

It is easy for a learned teacher to shut himself in his study and write a long and brilliant theory of conduct, but what is it worth? The path of human progress is littered with the wrecks of systems of truth elaborated by great theorists. Why? Because Truth expressed in words only, truth presented as something separate, and apart from the struggle of human life is worthless. A deaf and dumb boy practising obedience to God will teach more truth in one hour than a mere theorist can in a year. Christ was the greatest of all teachers. Yet He was a man who went about doing things, overcoming evil, doing good. His deeds far outweigh His words. He lived in the open. He was found daily in the market-place, the synagogue, and the fishing-boat, among

blind beggars, outcasts, publicans and sinners; and in every place where there were souls that needed Him. Jesus was indeed a teacher, but no other teacher had the same right as He, to point to His deeds as proof of the truthfulness of His teaching.

The Claims and Challenge of Christ. This Teacher who lived in perfect touch with the common people, who was the companion of outcasts and the friend of sinners, claims for Himself, and demands from His followers, unhesitating obedience to the highest possible moral and spiritual standards. His teaching is positive, absolute, aggressive. Right only is right, truth only is truth, and they must be followed without quibbling or evasion of any sort. His standards admit of no compromise, no exceptions, no accommodation to appetites, passions or weaknesses.

The aggressiveness of His teaching repelled the easy-going, and offended the rich. His condemnation of the immoral casuistry of the Scribes, and quibbling evasions of the Pharisees aroused their opposition and their hate. They denounced His words, and would gladly have denied His deeds if they could. But exalted as were the standards of the Master, He practised all that He taught. His most watchful enemies could find no divergence between His words and His deeds. His teaching and His daily life were in perfect accord. Was any other proof necessary?

Other proof was not necessary, and yet Christ Himself demanded that His words should be put to a severer test. Confident of His own faultless integrity, perfect purity of heart and sincerity of soul, Christ turned to those Jews who were seeking not only to destroy His teaching, but to destroy His life, and said,—“Because I tell you the truth ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin?”

It was a challenge to His bitterest enemies; but they dared not accept it. Then to them Christ put the heart-searching question—"If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Can more be asked of any teacher than this, that his very heart and soul shall be as perfect as his teaching?

When Pontius Pilate asked his half-sneering, half-despairing question, "What is truth?" Our Lord made no direct answer. To do so was impossible. Yet His reply is a wonderfully significant one, in the light of our study of His words to the Jews. Our Lord's words to Pilate are: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." Uttered almost at the foot of the Cross, He declared that the end for which He was born, the end for which He had lived, and the end for which He was about to die, is to bear witness to the truth.

Christ referred Pontius Pilate to His life. He refused to consider truth apart from human life, His truth apart from His own life. For all His teaching He claimed that "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Yea, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." What would you think of the sincerity, or sanity of any man who dared to make that claim to-day? None save the Son of Man has ever dared to face the question, "What is truth? and answer, "I AM THE TRUTH."

We have made our quest. What have we found? We have found the one certain standard of truth. And this standard is not a verbal statement, but a living Person; the Life of Him who is Truth. We have found that Christ Himself refused to allow His words to be considered apart from His deeds, His teaching separate from His life. His words are a part of Himself. Yet, they are not the greater,

but the lesser part of His teaching: for His words must always be measured and interpreted by the Person behind them.

Our Fundamental Principle of Interpretation, the one that is to be our guide in all our study, has been found.

We must interpret Our Lord's words by Our Lord's Life.

The mere statement of this basic principle makes clearer our vision and plainer our path. It eliminates self, the greatest of all difficulty-making factors. It transfers our standard of truth from the selfish experience of man to the self-sacrificing experience of man's Saviour. It exalts the sublime character of Our Teacher. In St. Paul's letters there is a greater revelation of truth than in his life, but in the Person of Christ is found a far greater revelation of truth than in all His words.

The Perfect Unity of Christ's Life and Teaching. The Master's words are many, His life is one. A vivid vision of His Person will lead us into the heart of His teaching. His Manger, His Cross, His vacant Sepulchre teach the spiritual realities of His Incarnation, His Atonement, His Resurrection with a power beyond that of words. What the Son of Man is, not what He said, must ever be to us the matter of supreme importance. The sublime words of the Gospel without the sublime Life behind them—what would they be to a heart-hungry soul? But now, having found Christ's own point of view, we see in every saying of the Master a line of autobiography, a flash of light from that divine life lived in the bosom of His Father, or a word of love out of that perfectly human life lived in the homes and hearts of men.

All that Christ taught he lived. All that He demanded of others He is. The standard of spotless perfection which

He held up before men is the mirror of His own spotless soul. His teaching and His living are inseparable, they are part of one divine harmony. The one true and certain interpretation of His words is found in His own flawless and radiant life.

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

Read St. Matt. 22:34-40. *Study* the passage with this question in mind. What does this teach about Biblical interpretation? Some think every word of Scripture equally important. What did the lawyer think? What did Christ think? Did Christ argue? What did He take for granted? Why did he not name *one* commandment as the lawyer desired? Is there any principle of interpretation involved?

What is the First Commandment? What the second? Which is more important? What did the Jews think? What did Our Lord say? *Study* St. Luke 6:6-11.

Compare St. Matt. 3:15 and St. John 16:12. Do they help interpret St. Matt. 10:5-6, and St. Matt. 28:16-20?

Study St. Mark 12:18-27. What did the questioners believe? What said Our Lord? When did Abraham die? Date of God's speaking to Moses? What bearing has this on vs. 27? on Biblical interpretation? Make notes of your studies.

CHAPTER III.

OUR LORD'S PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION.

Our Lord is the Great Interpreter. Much of His ministry was devoted to answering questions. He was asked about the prophets and teachers, the saints and sinners of the Old Covenant; about their words and their deeds, about what was sin, righteousness, and truth in the moral twilight in which they lived. He was asked concerning the world to come, and the destiny of man; asked to decide between the conflicting words and moral standards of the teachers of His own day. Moreover, in our day we need to apply His teaching to the multitudinous (and frequently conflicting) duties of life in a complex civilization, and we are often at a loss to know how to act. In all these matters we need definite guidance in order to discern and apply the truth. Does not our Lord's life help us in these matters?

There is no path or duty of man where Christ's life is not our light and our guide. It is true that some matters just mentioned may be outside of the personal life of Jesus, but so far as principles are concerned, nothing can come into our lives which did not come into the earthly career of the Son of Man. There are no questions concerning human life and duty that have not been answered either by His words, His principles or His life.

Let us then study the methods of Christ in answering the questions, meeting the moral problems, and solving the interpretative difficulties of His own age, and if we do it

with a sincere desire to know the truth, we shall surely discover the basic principles underlying His varying methods and applications.

In all His ministry no question asked the Master, was more important than that asked Him by a Pharisaic lawyer. (Matt. 22:35), "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?" It was a question concerning God's nature, and man's duty. It was also a question concerning Christ's principles of interpretation. We often meet people who think that every statement in the Bible is of equal importance, and that all Christ's teaching is on the same level; that God gave no great commandments, nor minor commandments, but that every inspired truth is equally important.

The lawyer thought differently. He took it for granted that there were great laws and lesser laws, and consequently, greater duties and lesser duties. Did our Lord contradict him? On the contrary He accepted the position of the lawyer as correct, and at once selected and recited a commandment which He placed above all others, save one.

This decision of Christ is one of far-reaching importance. It establishes for all time a principle of interpretation. All parts of an inspired book, chapter, or even of a paragraph, are not of equal importance. The fact that Christ fed 5,000 Galileans is on one level. The fact that "there was much grass in the place" is on another, and very different level. We have our Lord's authority for holding as a fundamental principle for the interpretation of the words of the Old Covenant, and for the understanding of His words in the Gospels, this truth: *All inspired truth is not of equal importance.*

But this first principle of Christ cannot stand alone. If

all spiritual truth is not on the same level, if some laws are more important than others, then we need some standard, some principle of interpretation by which we can separate the greater from the less. To rely upon self, to make our own judgment the standard, is to fall back into past disagreements, and past strife. Let us turn again to Christ. The lawyer's question took one thing for granted. The answer of our Lord takes several things for granted; and they are the most important things that are found in the Christian Religion. Indeed as we study Christ's words we shall see that He does here what He is doing constantly. Christ never argues about the basic truths of religion. He takes them for granted. He did so in this case.

Note His answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Here the Son of Man takes for granted (a) the first and most fundamental of all truths—the existence of God. He had come from the bosom of the Father. It was impossible for Him not to assume the existence of His own Father. He takes it for granted (b) that man was created in the moral and spiritual image of his Creator, and therefore is endowed with mental and moral freedom. He takes for granted (c) that these gifts from God made man accountable to God, and places upon him a personal responsibility to acknowledge that accountability in life and conduct.

Having thus taken for granted the great fundamental truths on which all religion is based, Jesus says to the lawyer. The highest possible form in which a man can express his obligation to God is not obedience, nor labor, nor worship, nor righteousness. It is in *love*. For true obedience, and righteousness, and labor, and worship are

the expression of love. Therefore, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

In what Christ takes for granted, and in the summary of God's law which he uttered, we find the second of our Lord's principles of interpretation,—the standard we must have to enable us to understand the relative greatness of the truth of God. *The most fundamental of all truths are those which reveal (a) the Person of God, (b) the Nature of Man (c) Man's relation to God, and (d) Man's relation to his neighbor.*

But this is not all that Christ's words teach us. In His wonderfully enlightening reply to the lawyer we find the application of another of our Lord's principles of interpretation. When we discover a new truth we are tempted by the glamour of its newness to do two things; first to forget that a whole is greater than any of its parts, and so we put the new truth above all others, regardless of its relative value. Then, secondly, we separate this new truth from all others and treat the part as if it were greater than the whole. To follow Christ's second principle of interpretation will keep us from the first error. To rightly study the Master's answer as a whole will disclose another principle which will save us from the second error.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," "This," the Master declared, "is the first and great Commandment." Why did not the Master stop right there? He had answered the lawyer's question. Measured by human minds His answer was complete. What need for anything more?

Or, if Christ wanted to name a Second Commandment, why did he not say, "The Second Commandment is Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? Both statements would have stood out clearly, each would have been distinct, and complete in itself. Why did He say more?

Because completeness to the mind of man is not completeness to the mind of Christ. To have said, "This is the first and great Commandment" and stopped there, would have been an untruth. *The Truth* knew personally what we know only theoretically. He saw perfectly what we see only partially, namely, that *all truth is a unit*. *No man is competent to say* this is the greatest of all temples, unless he has a knowledge of all temples on the face of the Earth; and no one can say this is the greatest of the truths of God, except He who is Himself God's Truth.

A great scientist was handed a single bone and asked to name the creature to which it belonged. He examined it carefully and answered, It does not belong to any known living animal. Later he said, It does not belong to any known extinct animal. Still later he drew the outline of an animal which no one had ever seen, and said, It belonged to a genus of animals resembling this. What was the basis of his answer?

A bone is what it is because of its relation to other bones. It is a part of a larger unit, an animal. Its place and function in the larger unit decides its size and shape and makes it what it is. He only who knows its relation to the animal unit, and the relation of that animal unit to the unity of the animal kingdom, is capable of understanding a single bone as the great scientist understood it.

Each separate truth is what it is because of its relation to other truths. It is part of a larger unit of truth, and this

larger unit of truth is itself but a fragment of revealed truth. So, all revealed truth is itself but a portion of that wholeness of truth which we shall know when we see the Divine Teacher face to face. Therefore to interpret any statement of truth without regard to its relation to other truths is to misinterpret it. For every statement of truth is necessarily a part-statement; its real meaning is conditioned by the larger truth of which it is a fragment.

Christ knew that in saying, even of the most fundamental truth, "this is the first and greatest," there was danger that man would ignore its relation to all truth, and use it to contradict all other truth. Therefore He added, "there is a second Commandment" equally first and greatest; and without it, the first cannot be rightly understood or interpreted. When we recall that in past times men burned their neighbors to compel them to love God, and to-day men are turning their backs upon God in order to show their love for their neighbors, we see why Christ would not separate the two great commandments. We also see that He was carefully guarding this principle of interpretation: *Each and every statement of truth is a part-statement and therefore has its limitations.*

From Christ's application of the above principle, we see that even the most basic truths which the mind of man is capable of grasping, are not complete in themselves. They need for their right interpretation, the limiting and enlightening power of those *like* truths to which they are closely related. If this be true of equal and "like" truths how much more is it true of unlike and lesser truths. Yet throughout the whole ministry of Christ the Jews contended that our Lord was a lawless man, because He healed the sick on the Sabbath.

The Master did not deny the laws of the Sabbath, but He did deny that the Sabbath law was the "first and greatest" of all laws. He held that the law of man's love to man, and of man's love to God, were both *more fundamental* than the law of the Sabbath. He held that man was not created for the welfare of the Sabbath, but that the Sabbath was ordained for the welfare of man. Therefore, it was "lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day." And in His acts of mercy and words of wisdom He made plain one application of another great principle, namely:—*Fundamental truths necessarily limit and qualify the interpretation of all other truths.*

In studying the words of Christ no thoughtful person can fail to be impressed by comparing two statements of the Master, one made at the very beginning and the other at the very end of His ministry. (Matt. 3: 15, and John 16: 12.) His words to the Baptist, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" are familiar. We know that the revelation of the Gospel is the fulfilment of Old Testament revelation; but it comes as a surprise when Christ on one of the last days of His earthly life, turns, not to strangers, but to those who had been His companions and pupils for nearly three years, saying, "I have many things to say unto you, *but ye cannot bear them now.*" Yet what a light does this incident throw upon the method of the Master, upon the loving carefulness with which, little by little, He had given them God's truth as their earth clouded hearts were prepared to receive and to understand it. How plainly it tells *us* that the principle which underlies the revelation of the Old Covenant also underlies the New. The Father through lawgivers and prophets, and the Son through His own words and life, have gradually revealed the truth to man as he was able to bear it. In other words the divine principle is:—"All Revela-

tion is progressive, the later truth is necessarily the more complete truth."

Prejudice, partizanship, pride,—these have been in the past and are in lesser degree to-day, the dominant forces that make for misinterpretation. Yet God overrules man's narrowness, even man's wickedness for the advancement of His truth. It was the contradictions of His enemies that moved our Lord to make plain His principles of historical interpretation.

The last day of His public teaching (Mark 12:18) the Sadducees came to the Master with the story of the woman who had been the wife of seven. They thought their foolish fable an unanswerable argument against the resurrection of the dead, but Christ calmly answered, "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living.'" The brevity of Christ's reply hides from the careless reader the force of an argument which came to His Hebrew hearers with irresistible power. When God spoke to Moses Abraham had been dead 300 years. Therefore, according to the Sadducean teaching, Abraham for that length of time had ceased to exist.

The rebuke of Christ was needed: "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." The Sadducees were recognized leaders and teachers. They were perfectly familiar with the *words* Christ quoted, yet they had not seen the force of God's words. They had ignored the time, the condition, and the circumstances under which they were uttered. The words of Holy Scripture are interpreted foolishly or falsely whenever they are considered

apart from their historical relation. The principle of the Master is:—*All Inspired Statements Must be Interpreted Historically. The meaning of doubtful words or phrases is determined by the historical conditions under which they were uttered.*

The argument of Christ against the Sadducees is most important. It is based on divine principles, too large to be exhausted by the above statement. In every age there have been men who imagined that they had discovered contradictions in the words of Christ. But if we are foolish enough to imagine that one statement of the Master can contradict another, it is because we are foolish enough to take it for granted that *we know* all truth, and therefore are competent to say that whatever is a contradiction *to us* is a contradiction of the Son of God. Verbal contradictions are not necessarily contradictions of truth, either in chemistry, mathematics, or Holy Scripture.

The teacher puts his thought into words and speaks them. The idea they start in the hearer's mind, is not the teacher's idea but the hearer's idea. It is never exactly the same as the teacher's idea. The meaning which the teacher puts into his words is decided by his experience; and the interpretation a hearer puts upon the same words is decided by his experience. Other things being equal, the greater the gulf between the experience of the teacher, and that of the hearer, the greater will be the gulf between the truth spoken and the truth received. If we, in any measure, realize the vastness of the gulf between our own limitations and the wisdom of the Son of God, we shall be slow to pronounce any saying of Christ "a contradiction."

To the Sadducees, proud and confident of their own knowledge, Christ said, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scrip-

tures.” His words to them are His words to every man who makes his own ignorance of God’s truth the foundation on which to build an argument against the words of God’s Son. *But the Son has Himself given us the standard by which to test His words.* The reiterated claim of Christ is that His life and teachings are one. If there be any recorded words attributed to Him which are contradicted by His life, then we should be justified in rejecting them. Have you ever found such words?

We are now ready to accept our final interpretive principle. It may well be expressed in these words:—*Our Lord’s Teaching cannot contradict His life. Seeming contradictions arise from the limitations of human speech, the limitations of human knowledge, or the partialness of divine revelation.*

We have now completed our search for the interpretive principles of the Master. Before we enter upon the next stage of our study, let us re-state what we have already accomplished. We are to study

THE WORDS OF CHRIST.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE: *Our Lord’s Words must always be interpreted by Our Lord’s Life.*

OUR LORD’S INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES.

- I. All Inspired Truth is not equally important.
- II. The most fundamental truths are those which reveal (a) the Person of God, (b) the nature of Man, (c) Man’s relation to God, and (d) Man’s relation to his neighbor.
- III. Every statement of truth is a partial statement and therefore has its limitations.
- IV. Fundamental truths, necessarily limit and qualify the interpretation of all other truths.

OUR LORD'S INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES.

- V. All Revelation is progressive: the later truth is necessarily the more complete truth.
- VI. All Inspired Statements must be interpreted historically. The meaning of doubtful words is determined by the conditions under which they were uttered.
- VII. Our Lord's teaching cannot contradict His Life. Seeming contradictions arise from (a) the limitations of human language, (b) the limitations of human knowledge, or (c) the partialness of the divine records.

The above principles are to be our guide in all our studies. If you are not sure that you understand them, or the authority on which they are founded, turn back and carefully re-read this chapter. We shall have occasion to refer to these principles many times. If you commit them to memory it will help you in later studies.

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

Before you take up the study of the next chapter write down the particulars in which the Jews differed from the other nations. What was the purpose of the Old Covenant? What were Jewish conditions between Malachi and John Baptist? Note what you know about the Sadducees. Also of the Pharisees. What relation did Christ's teaching bear to theirs? To the teaching of the Prophets? Study each of these subjects separately, and carefully. We *must* have some knowledge of the historical conditions under which Christ taught or we cannot understand His words, or *Him*. A Bible dictionary is the best aid. There are brief "helps" at the back of all good Bibles.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR LORD'S WORDS AND THE TEACHING OF HIS AGE.

Our Lord's Words must be Interpreted Historically. The Sadducees failed to understand God's words at the burning bush because they ignored the time, and circumstances under which they were uttered. For the same reason many fail to understand Christ's words to-day. We forget that the Master's words were spoken to Jewish ears, to be interpreted by Jewish experience and Jewish religious standards. We forget that Christian ideals, and Christian conceptions of righteousness did not exist in the time of Christ.

The only way to enter into the heart of teaching addressed the Hebrew ears two thousand years ago, is to put ourselves in the Hebrew's place, listen with Hebrew ears, and interpret by means of Hebrew ideals, conceptions, and experiences. The way to misunderstand the Master's words is to listen with Twentieth Century ears, and interpret by the ideals and conceptions of to-day.

The Early Historical Condition of the Jews. We are what the past has made us. So were the Jews in the time of Christ. The Hebrew Nation differed from all other races on the earth; differed in its origin, and in its relation to Jehovah. The Hebrews were an unique race; separated from all peoples by their God, their religious conceptions, their moral laws, and their peculiar politico-religious ideals, hopes, and delusions. If we could put three years of study

on the Old Testament, we would better understand the religious atmosphere in which Christ taught, and the dominant Jewish concepts of life and duty which helped, or hindered His hearers in understanding His words.

If ever a people was created to do a great work for God, it was the Children of Israel. They were, in Abraham, separated from other nations and bound to God in sacred covenant. They received, through Moses, a divinely ordained moral law, priesthood, and system of worship. They were, through Samuel, given an order of holy Prophets, divinely inspired to teach the will of God. They were made a great and glorious nation, of which God Himself was King. When they despised the goodness of God and rebelled against His laws, He again and again punished them with defeat and captivity. When Israel repented and returned to obedience, God again and again restored to them their land, and the cities of their fathers. *This* was the favored and disobedient, disciplined and forgiven people to whom Christ came. They ought to have been better prepared for His coming than any other people on the face of the earth. Were they?

Jewish Conditions between Malachi and John the Baptist. The voice of prophecy, the voice of spiritual uplift, was silent. It was a period of four hundred years of spiritual decay for the Jewish people, of alternating political freedom and bitter bondage for the Jewish nation. Their one hope was in the promises of Jehovah; their one great longing was for the promised Messiah. But the "Messiah" and "King" they intensely longed for was to be a political leader, a "Son of David" who would destroy their oppressors, and restore in earthly greatness and power the ancient throne of Israel. There was no national drawing

near to God—no spiritual desire for victory over pride and oppression, over injustice, lust, or self-righteousness.

Before the Christ was born the Jews had spread over all the world. There were 700,000 Jews in Palestine. There were over six times that number outside of it. Everywhere they remained Jews, clung to their Messianic hopes, built their synagogues, and worshipped God after the manner of their fathers. They held high commercial and social positions, yet they considered Judea their home. They were proud of Jerusalem, attended its feasts, or sent contributions to sustain them. They despised heathen worship, yet they adopted the intellectual culture of the Greeks, and translated their Scriptures into Greek. Everywhere the great truths of the Jewish religion were known to the educated. Everywhere were thoughtful Gentiles who turned from heathenism and became Jewish proselytes, and looked for a coming Messiah.

The Fulness of Time, was the hour of the fulness of human need, and the fulness of divine preparation. The world was unconsciously waiting for the hour of the Messiah. The strange fact is that every nation on the earth was more willing to welcome the Messiah than the Jewish nation. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And what is still more striking is the fact that this nation which refused to accept its own Spiritual King, had been itself an active factor in preparing all other nations to accept the teaching of "The King of the Jews."

Conditions Created by the Sadducees. These were the aristocrats of their day. They were largely members of priestly families. They had almost a monopoly of the high-priesthood; they possessed large political power. They were rich, proud, and socially exclusive. In religion they

were materialists. For them there was no future life, no resurrection, no eternal rewards or penalties; no angels, no spirits, no soul, or if there was one, it perished with the body.

At first the Sadducees regarded the teachings of the Master with indifference or contempt; but when He drove the money-mongers out of the Temple courts He touched their prerogatives and their purses, and they became His open enemies. Yet these were the men who filled the highest priestly offices and shaped the devotions of Israel!

Conditions Created by the Pharisees. These were the teachers of Israel and shaped the morals of the Nation. They were Separatists, too holy to associate with Gentiles or Samaritans, Publicans or sinners. Whatever was non-Jewish in religion was to them despicable and unclean. Except a few thousand Sadducees, and a group of politicians, free-thinkers, and sensualists, called Herodians, the Jews blindly followed the teachings of the Pharisees. They were the expounders of the Law, the Jesuits of Israel; its official saints, its shining examples of righteousness.

The doctrines of the Sadducees were contradicted by those of the Pharisees. These taught the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the coming judgment, and everlasting rewards and penalties. They believed in angels and spirits; expected a Messianic King who would deliver them from the Romans, restore the throne of David, and reign in Jerusalem. They believed that the new Kingdom of the Messiah would be a kingdom of saints, and *they* were the saints! For were not they the only ones who kept the whole Law? What the last of the great Hebrew Prophets thought of both of these sects is best expressed by himself. "When John saw many of the Pharisees and

Sadducees come to his baptism he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ”

How did the Pharisees keep the Law? According to its very letter, as expounded by Scribes and lawyers. For them it was a law of externals; it touched neither inner motive nor inner morality. It concerned their punctilious doing of empty trifles. It exalted ceremonial over conduct: behavior over holiness. Its whole tendency was to make not saints but hypocrites. They elaborated and applied the Law to regulate every possible action under every possible condition.

Note for example, how they made God's Law ridiculous. The quantity of food allowed to be carried on the Sabbath must be less than a dried fig; of honey, only enough to anoint a wound; of water, only enough to make eye salve. To kindle, or to extinguish a fire was to break the Sabbath; so according to most Rabbis, to give medicine to a sick man, set his bones, or dig a dead man out of the ruins of his fallen house, made one a Sabbath breaker. Absurd rules were given as to what knots could be tied, or untied on the Sabbath day. A camel's or a sailor's knot was forbidden. A knot that could be loosed with one hand, or one to fasten on a sandal, was permitted. To write two letters of the alphabet with the hand was to profane the Sabbath, but if they were written with the mouth, or the foot, they were not illegal!

And all this (and very much more equally absurd) was “keeping the Law of God,” was following righteousness, was an exhibition of holiness, was piling up merits against the day of judgment! Do you wonder that the common folk marvelled at the teaching of Christ? Or that they

exclaimed in astonishment "He teacheth not as the Scribes!" Do you wonder that the Pharisees vehemently denounced the Son of Man as a Sabbath breaker? Could even the Christ enter this atmosphere, reeking with false teaching, and not find His own teaching made difficult?

The Master's Methods were determined by the historical conditions of His age. The false teachers of Israel had for generations poisoned the minds of the people. They had degraded their religion and their morals. Worse than that, they had *degraded the language* of religion; so that the very words in which men spoke of God, and which should have drawn men to God, separated their souls from God. Do you realize the great difficulty created by these conditions? For the Master to have expressed Himself in the words of the Pharisees would have been to spread their falsehoods, not to teach His own truths. What was He to do?

The Master is the one perfect Teacher for all time. No other knew His hearers as He knew them. No other with such absolute perfection fitted His words to the hearts of His hearers. This is seen in the Master's avoidance of all Jewish theological terminology; His large use of parables; His constant use of illustrations from daily life; His general avoidance of teaching on the externals of religion; His carefulness to teach nothing before His hearers were "able to bear it." His great care to keep the "Kingdom of God" separate from the kingdoms of this world, from the contamination of political plots, and earthly ambitions; and His constant emphasis upon the supreme importance of spiritual worship, and the spiritual realities of the world to come is plain to every careful student.

When the Master has but one pupil, whether a member

of the Jewish hierarchy, a simple Samaritan, or a humble disciple searching for truth, His task is easy. He had only to adapt His words to a single questioner whose needs He knew,—indeed, knew so perfectly that He answers not the words of the questioner's lips, but the very thought of his heart which prompted his questioning. We may know nothing of the wayside traveller to whom Christ speaks, yet if we realize that in every case the Master perfectly fitted His words to that individual's particular needs, we shall find in His words are not alone an expression of His marvellous wisdom, but a revelation of the motive and character of the man to whom He speaks.

When Christ stands before a company of simple, or devout souls like Zacharius and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, Andrew and Philip or Nathaniel, He speaks freely of the truths dear to His heart. Such hearers understood His words; and we, two thousand years later, read and understand them to-day. When, however, Christ stands before a mixed company of Scribes, Pharisees and Lawyers, Sadducees, Herodians and Zealots His teaching problem is a very different one, and our difficulty in interpreting His words to-day is correspondingly increased.

No religious teaching of Christ's day was, in theory, so close to His own as that of the Pharisees. Yet no other sect did our Lord so utterly condemn. Why? Because although the Pharisees pretended to teach the Law of God, *their interpretations* emptied it of all meaning, or contradicted its real teaching. The general effect of their Jesuitical interpretations was to put darkness for light, and to turn righteousness into a gilded lie, or a pretentious sham.

The historical fact that God raised up the prophets purposely to expound His laws, and pronounce His judgments

on both priests and people; and the additional fact that the prophet was God's chosen mouthpiece, these truths the Pharisees carefully ignored. Their constant question was, not what saith the prophets of God, but what say the Scribes, the great Rabbis, the Doctors of the Law?

The Basis of our Lord's Teaching was that of the Prophets of Israel. Where the prophet's word ended, there the word of Christ began. The Prophet emphasized the moral and spiritual nature of God, His absolute holiness, purity, truth, justice, and mercy. On these qualities also fell the emphasis of the teaching of God's Son. The Prophet demanded the highest morality of man, of society, of the Nation. He demanded honesty, sincerity in worship, chastity and charity. He denounced luxury, oppression hypocrisy, and all uncleanness. Are not these also the calls, and the condemnations of the Kingdom of God?

The prophets had a passion for truth. They were strenuous for the righteousness of the Nation. Israel had not been called of God for her own sake, and must not live for her own glory. Her mission was to all the nations of the earth. "Salvation was of the Jews," but not for the Jews alone. Jehovah was God of all. He alone could be man's Deliverer and Saviour. The Redeemer would suddenly come to God's Temple. His Kingdom would be an everlasting kingdom, and His Name should be great among the Gentiles.

All that the prophets taught, the Messiah taught with greater clearness, and more splendid power. All that the prophets saw afar off, He realized in His own blessed life. He lived their ideals. He was the Incarnation of their highest and holiest aspirations. He was God's Answer to all their hopes, and prayers and visions. The prophets

were the lips of God speaking His truth. The Son of Man was Himself *The Truth of God* living among men.

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

Read the *prophecy* in St. Luke 1:57-80. *Study* it. Shut your eyes and picture it. Do it again and again until you catch its *spirit*. Then read the *history* in St. Luke 3:1-18. If you have prepared yourself devoutly, it will come to you with new force and meaning. Then read the prophetic and historic climax of St. John's ministry and the Beginning of Our Lord's, as found in St. Matt. 3:17 to 4:1-11. Count up the different revelations at the Jordan. Is *truth* constructive, or destructive? What reason had the Jews for saying that Christ destroyed the Law? Write out your answers for future reference. To unlearn is often the beginning of knowledge.

CHAPTER V.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING AND OLD TESTAMENT TRUTH.

REPENT! "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." So came the voice of one crying in the wilderness after four hundred years of prophetic silence. It was the voice of a new hope, and a new life. Had not all the prophets foretold a coming Messiah? The Lord is at hand! So came the word of St. John to the common people of Judea. Their answer was instant. They flocked to his open-air confessional, to his baptism, and eagerly prayed for the coming Kingdom.

The Mission of St. John was clear. None understood it better than himself. He was one sent from God to prepare the way of the Lord; the way which leads into the hearts of God's people. It was the highway of the prophets, but it had been for centuries so utterly neglected that it was unusable. St. John restored the ancient paths. He did his work without fear, and without favor. He did it with a noble humility.

Then, with an eager expectancy, St. John looks beyond the crowds that flock to his baptism. His eye and ear are alert. He is watching for the coming of his Lord. This is the end and crown of all his labors. That he may recognize the Messiah amid the multitudes, God had promised him a sign. By prophetic intuition the Baptist recognizes in Jesus of Nazareth one holier than himself. Nay, come not Thou to my baptism. "I have need to be baptized of Thee and

comest Thou to me?" But Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so now : for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He suffered Him. Then came to St. John the sign promised of God, the descending Dove; the Voice from Heaven. St. John knew that he had baptized the promised Messiah, and that his own mission was fulfilled.

The Threefold Revelation at the Jordan. In the whole life of the Son of Man there is no event more momentous, than that which occurred at the Jordan, save the one which hallowed the Hill of Calvary; for as the acorn holds in its heart the living oak, so the self-surrender and self-consecration of the Baptism included the surrender and consecration of the Cross.

The Revelation of the Messiah came from God to St. John. It satisfied him. His own eyes saw the opened Heaven and the descending Dove. To the official delegation sent from the authorities of the Temple, he answered emphatically "I am not the Messiah," "I baptize with water, but there standeth One among you whom ye know not." "The same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." To his own disciples he said of the Messiah, "Behold the Lamb of God." "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above, is above all."

The Revelation of the Messiah's Nature was also from God. The words which St. John heard from heaven forever settled the question of the Messiah's Person. "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." From the prophets (whose words had been his study from childhood) St. John knew that the Messiah was to be "a prophet like unto Moses," was to be "the Son of David," the King of a new and glorious nation, the "Deliverer of Israel" from spiritual bondage. But "*My Beloved Son!*" That opened

to the eyes of St. John a new and unexpected vision. The Son of God, and yet the Lamb of God!

To us, more than to the Baptist, the words of the Father are a revelation of the source of the Son of Man's divine knowledge, the foundation of His authority, the certainty of His teaching. It was the revelation of God Himself. The hunger of the human heart is not to know words about God, or to hear of the Almighty's power, but to know the Father of Spirits in His relation to our own spirit, and this is our Jordan revelation. God's divine Son is one with the Father; God's human Son is one with us. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. In the Son's tender love, His tireless sympathy, His strong guidance, and power to restore, we see God walking among men and drawing them to Himself by the strong cords of human love.

The Revelation of the Messiah's Mission :—Because the Babe of Bethlehem was born King of the Jews, neither His office, nor Ministry, nor Mission were His own. Before He was born He was set apart and dedicated to the finishing of His Father's work. When found in the manger He was first of all, a part of the past of the Hebrew Nation. He also belonged to, and was a part of all that nation's future. He was Himself the living foundation of a new theocracy, a new line of spiritual Kings, Priests and Prophets. His appearance at the Jordan marked the end of the old, and the beginning of the new Kingdom of God.

“I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?” these words of the Baptist were not contradicted. His words were true. He had proclaimed that his was a baptism of water, not of the Holy Spirit; was a baptism unto repentance, not into the Kingdom of God. “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteous-

ness." In this answer of the Sinless One, we have a clear vision of the supreme purpose of the Ministry of Jesus Christ. Study it in the light of the Father's teaching and training of the Hebrew race. Study it in the light of the Son's most holy life, and we shall see His one aim. The supreme purpose of Christ's life is to do His Father's will, and finish His Father's work.

The Father's Unfinished Work. Before the Christian Era a devout seeker for light is handed a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures. He begins at Genesis and carefully reads the Story of the Creation, and fall of Man. The promise Jehovah makes to Eve claims his reverent attention. One born of woman is to come; is to conquer and restore, through suffering. He finds in later chapters this divine promise enlarged, and repeated. He reads that the Coming One is to be the Head of a chosen family. He is to come as a Prophet, and Law Giver like unto Moses. Later he reads that the Coming One will be the Head of a chosen Nation; a Royal Conqueror. So the devout Gentile reads on, finding in every book of the Prophets additional particulars. Yet, as he finishes the last pages of Malachi he realizes that the divine promises are unfulfilled.

He begins again and follows a new clew, the use of sacrifices as an act of worship. He notes their divine origin; their initial simplicity, their gradual development, their use in the Covenant promises made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He notes the dramatic character of the Sacrifice of the Passover, its sprinkling of the blood, and its mysterious teaching that the blood is the life. He is interested in the wonderful sacrifices connected with the Tabernacle, their unity and system, their dramatic beauty and mystery. But what are they for? What is their real, their inner mean-

ing? Of what benefit are they? How can the offering of the life of a lamb help the life of a man? The truth-seeker reads on, and on, but he finds no answer to his questions. Again he finishes the last chapter of the Prophets, yet the divine worship remains unexplained.

Once more our earnest student returns to the Hebrew Scriptures and reads again. Now he is impressed by its record of many righteous souls who (like himself) were seeking to find God, and to understand His ways. He finds them even in Genesis and once and again in later historical books. Their heart's cry for God,—“Even for the living God,” is heard in the Psalms, in Job, and in all the Prophets. Why does the Coming One so long delay His coming? Why are not God's promises fulfilled? Many are the blessings of the righteous, but man's highest and deepest longings are left unsatisfied.

What has the devout student found in his threefold search? He has found that the Hebrew Scriptures are—A record of promises and prophecies, unfulfilled; of offerings and sacrifices, unexplained; of spiritual longings, unsatisfied. Plainly God's work is unfinished; but who can be its completer, and fulfiller? “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” These words are a full disclosure of the Messiah's Mission,—the sublime purpose of the Son of Man,—the end for which He lived and for which He died was—“to fulfil all righteousness.”

God's righteousness had been revealed for thousands of years. It had never been fulfilled. Nay more,—it had never been *fully* revealed. The spiritual depths of the Old Covenant promises had never been sounded. The spiritual meaning of the Law waited for its True Interpreter. The mystery of its sacred sacrifices waited for an High Priest,

holy enough to reveal the fulness of their meaning. The saints of all ages had waited, hoped, hungered and thirsted, after God's righteousness, but had found no one whose perfect life and perfect knowledge of the Father's will qualified Him to complete God's eternal purpose.

The Absolute Loyalty of the Son. The words of Jesus at the Jordan, read in the light of His wonderful ministry, identify His purpose with His Father's purpose, and make His mission as world-wide and age-long as God's. No man ever dared to set before himself so vast a work; no man ever began his work so humbly. By receiving the Baptism of water Jesus identifies himself with the work of the Baptist, for this also is His Father's work. For the fulfilling of His own work, He receives the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The teaching of our Lord is a spiritual interpretation of the teaching of His Father's Covenant. All inspired revelation is progressive. If a human being is to receive any revelation from God it must be adapted to human limitations. It cannot be given any faster than man is able to understand it. Therefore, we find that God's Old Covenant revelation is not an outburst of blinding light, but a gradual spiritual illumination. The Father's reason for the incompleteness of revelation is plainly spoken by the Son. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

It was to the fulfilling and completing of this progressive Revelation of the Father that the Son loyally consecrated His life at the Jordan. It was His joy to say at the *beginning* of His ministry "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." (Jn. 4: 34.) It was His joy to say at the *end* of His ministry: "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. (Jn. 17: 4.) It was the last

word, and the last joy of His earthly life to say from the cross :—"IT IS FINISHED!"

The Destructive Power of Truth :—The Jews accused the Son of Man of not keeping, even of destroying the Law. Jesus answers, "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." (Matt. 5 : 17.) No words could be more emphatic, no words more true. And yet the accusation of the Jews was superficially correct. The power of truth to destroy everything that is untrue is as great as its power to conserve all that is essentially and eternally true. The teaching of the Christ was intended to destroy all the human glosses, Pharisaic traditions, and Rabbinical interpretations which the Jews (not Moses), had added to the divine Law, and many of which utterly perverted its meaning, or destroyed its God-given purpose.

More than this, the growth of eternal truth not only destroys all that is untrue,—it destroys also whatever in earlier truth is partial and incomplete. The complete revelation always supersedes the partial. Christ, in *fulfilling* the ancient Law, necessarily made of none effect all within it that was local or temporary.

A certain Gentile had a fig-tree in his dooryard. One day while cutting off some of its branches, his neighbor, a very pious Jew, asked with surprise, "Why are you destroying your beautiful tree?" The owner answered "I am not destroying, I am pruning it, that it may bear fruit." The Jew exclaimed, "Heaven forbid! Look at the great size of its branches and beauty of its leaves! Will you foolishly destroy all these for the sake of a little fruit?"

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

What does St. John 1:10-11 mean? How many times was Christ rejected? Study the relation of St. Luke 4:16-30 to St. John 6:41-42 and

6:66-67, to St. John 12:37-40, and St. Matt. 21:33-43. Read the first four chapters of St. Luke; then the first four of St. John. First read them intensely to get the historic and vivid picture. Then re-read them slowly seeking the personal spiritual message. Where did Christ find His first friends, and who were they? Where His first and bitter foes? Who were the Master's first private pupils? Write out their different characteristics. Which was given the harder lesson? (St. John 2 and 4.) What part did His first friends take in the latter conversation?

What place do miracles occupy in Christ's *teaching*? Which is the greater miracle, an act of superhuman wisdom, or of superhuman power? Did Christ ever give truth or health to the unwilling? What was the social attitude of Jewish Teachers? Of the Christ? Write a comparison of them.

CHAPTER VI.

TEACHING IN THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION.

WE have accepted as the basis of our study of the Master's teaching this principle—Our Lord's words must be interpreted by our Lord's life. His life on earth was a perfectly human life (sin excepted). It was lived under perfectly human conditions. This means that His teaching, like that of every human instructor had (a) its beginning, (b) its development, (c) its culmination, and (d) its close. Moreover, at each stage, the instruction was conditioned by the period in which it was given. Have you noted this in your reading?

The Four Stages of Our Lord's Teaching. If I ask you at what stage of His teaching did the Master say "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," Can you tell me? Or when did He say, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven"? Or when did He say, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations"? I can recall when I could not have answered any such questions. Yet the last saying could not have been spoken at any stage of His teaching except the one in which it was uttered. The second saying might have been spoken in the third or fourth stage of His instruction, but it could not have been uttered in the first. And while the words first quoted might have been uttered at any stage of His teaching, yet their deep

significance comes from the historical time, place and conditions that produced them.*

Each stage of the Master's teaching is conditioned by the corresponding historical period of His Ministry. In relation to His teaching, we have named the first stage, The Period of Preparation; the second stage, The Period of Organization; the third, The Period of Self-Manifestation; the fourth, The Period of the Passion. The time covered by this first period is about twelve months, it extends from Our Lord's Baptism to His rejection at Nazareth. Its teaching took place mainly in Judea.

Conditions under which the Christ began teaching: God had just pronounced Him His Son. The Baptist is ready to proclaim Him the Messiah. The Jewish Rulers are excited by the fearless teaching of the Baptist, and the eager expectancy of the people. The tempter waits in the wilderness to tempt and destroy. Under such conditions, every word of the Christ comes to us with an intensity of meaning equalled by no other period, except that which preceded His cross. We shall not really penetrate into the heart of this period unless the spirit of the period first penetrates into our hearts.

First Words in the Wilderness, and the Temple. The Christ announced at the Jordan His life's one aim. His Father's *will* is His will. His Father's *purpose* is His purpose. The Temptation is Satan's supreme effort to undermine both will and purpose. If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But Jesus

*For a full presentation of the natural divisions of our Lord's life and teaching, see the Author's earlier handbook, "How to Study the Life of Christ." As the conclusions of that volume are the foundations on which this one is built, its study ought to precede the use of this manual.

answers "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If thou trustest God cast thyself down from this pinnacle. "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Thou desirest a kingdom, worship me and I will give thee all the world and its glory. "Get thee hence, Satan." Each word of the tempter is turned aside by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Quick to repel a foe, Christ is equally quick to call a friend. (Jn. 1 :35-51) "Master, where dwellest thou?" "Come and see." "Follow me." So the King began to call men and to train them to become disciples. Keen to detect the evil beneath the inspired words on the lips of the tempter, Christ is equally keen to detect the latent good in the brother of Andrew. Simon, "Thou shalt be called Peter," and from that moment Simon Peter was under a divine training which outlasted the earthly life of his Teacher. (Acts 10 : 1-29)

The words of Christ spoken to Nathaniel (Jn. 1 : 47,48), were to him a revelation of Jesus' superhuman knowledge. "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." This was the first confession of the Messianic office of Jesus. He accepts it gladly; yet, in doing so, He also corrects it. Nathaniel's widest faith stopped within the bounds of Israel, but the vision of the Master was not thus limited. The vision promised to Nathaniel was not that of the "King of Israel," but that of the "Son of Man," i. e., the Universal Man, "the Word made Flesh." Not the Jewish Christ, but the World-wide Christ. (Ps. 144 : 5, Isa. 64 : 6) "The Son of Man" is the title constantly given by Christ to Himself. It occurs over seventy times during His early ministry.

At His first Passover, the Christ made His earliest and bitterest foes. "Take these things hence, make not My Father's House a house of merchandise." (Jn. 2: 13-25) The words are few, but they carry a fearless intensity, and purpose characteristic of this period. His words are instantly challenged; His authority indignantly demanded. For His words carried to Jewish ears far more than they bring to us.

Remember that even the Jewish children were familiar with the words of the Old Testament. The minds of the Rulers were full of them, particularly the ringing ones concerning the coming of the Messiah in His Kingdom. You remember also that these same Rulers had sent an official delegation to question the Baptizer (Jn. 1:19-27). But he had answered, "I am not the Messiah," I am not Elijah; I am a voice crying in the wilderness (as foretold by Isaiah), "Make straight the way of the Lord." The enigmatical form of the Baptist's reply only increased the Rulers' uneasiness.

Moreover, these expounders of the Scriptures could not forget that the appearance of Elijah was to be followed by that of the Messiah, who would suddenly come to His Temple; yes, come as a purifying fire! Had the fire already come? Does this Galilean pretender claim to be a reformer? a Prophet? or the Messiah? In any case He must produce His credentials! So the Temple's guardians indignantly demand "What sign showest Thou unto *us* seeing thou doest these things?"

"Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Even Christ's own followers did not understand these words. What wonder that officials, whose teaching emphasized superficial things and ignored spiritual truth,

should hear in the Master's words merely a reference to the material Temple in which He was standing?

But the words of our Lord have a larger meaning for us. The beginning prophesies the end and must be measured by the end. As the disciples understood Our Lord's words, after "He was risen from the dead," so we understand them to-day. Standing upon the threshold of His ministry, the Christ clearly saw its end, and that end included His own death and resurrection. On these he saw reared a spiritual Temple that should need no rebuilding.

First Private Instructions Concerning The Kingdom.
"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The person to whom Christ spake was no curious seeker for superficial information. A Ruler of his Nation, a member of its highest council, a custodian of God's Temple, Nicodemus had been stirred by the preaching of the Baptist. He had accepted His word that the long-hoped-for Messiah was near. He knew that thousands of devout Jews had received John's baptism. He knew John denied being the Messiah. He knew that he who baptized with water, proclaimed a Messiah who should baptize with the Holy Spirit, and with fire. But a new prophet from Galilee had suddenly appeared, driven the traders from the Temple Courts, and done wonderful miracles in the streets of Jerusalem. What did it all mean? What sort of a kingdom was coming? What was the Prophet of Galilee's part in it?

Such were the thoughts and questions which surged through the mind of Nicodemus as he sought Jesus of Nazareth; it was to his thought and not to his polite words that our Lord with unerring accuracy, made answer. The Ruler's words are those of a man bewildered by many

teachers. The Master's words are those of authority, and certainty. The new kingdom can be entered in only one way, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." The whole emphasis here, and in the next conversation, falls upon the spiritual nature of the Kingdom; and what must follow, the Spiritual nature of the birth required for entrance. It at once lifts the new Kingdom above all Jewish speculation or expectation, either political or ecclesiastical. The Kingdom is not built upon flesh and blood, and those who are born of the flesh only, cannot enter it. God is Spirit, His Kingdom is spiritual; the entrance must be by a spiritual birth.

The words, "by water and the spirit" would turn the thoughts of Nicodemus to the connection between the words of the Baptist and those of the Master, and help him to understand their meaning. The symbolic use of water in the religious purifications of the Jews, the water baptism of Gentile proselytes, the water baptism by John, after personal confession, these were already in the mind of the Ruler. And for this reason the Master dwelt not upon the outward and visible symbol, but upon the inward and invisible birth by the Spirit. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again, the Spirit breatheth where He willeth, and thou hearest His voice, but cannot tell whence He cometh, or whither He goeth; in like manner is everyone born of the spirit."—(Ellicott's translation).

"If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" The Ruler of Israel is not given easy lessons, but deep spiritual truths which the Master uttered not again until near the close of His ministry; i. e. the truth of the spir-

itual omnipresence of the Son of Man, of the certainty of His death, of its world-wide results.

The Master's conversation with the Samaritan woman is quite as remarkable as that with Nicodemus. Like that, the emphasis falls upon the spiritual nature and obligations of the coming Kingdom. Here again Our Lord reveals Himself to a single soul, and with a freedom and fullness which He withholds from the public. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink."—The thirsty soul stands before the Giver of Living Water, and, knowing it not, questions of earthly things. The Master's answer partially awakens her. She asks an ecclesiastical question. Again she receives a spiritual reply, an answer not to her words but to her needs, to her restless and thirsty soul. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The teaching is clear. The worship that is acceptable to God, the Eternal Spirit, is not determined by the place where it is offered, by the nationality of the worshipper, by his mental knowledge, by his liturgical methods nor the absence of them, nor by any other outward condition. The worshipper that God seeks, and accepts is the one who, recognizing God's true nature, as Father and Eternal Spirit, offers Him the homage of a devout and childlike spirit.

"Salvation is of the Jews." Do the words seem harsh? The Master cannot deny historical facts, or conditions. Little as they appreciated the treasure which they possessed, the Jews were the divinely appointed guardians of the "Oracles of

God.” Of the honor of their stewardship they were proud; to its vast responsibilities they were blind. “God is no respecter of persons.” The sincere worship of the Samaritan and the Jew are equally acceptable to the Father.

“I that speak unto thee am He.” The Christ that is to come, the Messiah that you are expecting, is speaking to you. The sinful Samaritan woman is given a revelation of the office and mission of the Son of Man which He had withheld from the learned and pious Ruler, and which he refused for another year to give to the Scribes and Pharisees; though they persistently demanded it. There is such a thing as holding truth, even God’s truth in falsehood. They who *so* hold it close the door against its light and life more effectually than those who are groping in ignorance and sin.

Knowing that their Master was tired and hungry his followers prayed Him to partake of their purchased food. “I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.” His reply should recall to us what He said at the Jordan, of the supreme purpose of His Ministry. His loving but earth-bound followers, only asked the confidential question, “Hath any man brought Him aught to eat?” He and they were standing side by side; but they were living in different worlds, and being supported by different nourishment.

That the Son of Man found in Samaria “Meat to eat” which nourished His weary spirit, and made glad the heavy heart He brought from Jerusalem, is made evident by His spending two days in this field, “White for the harvest.” That He revealed to them the gospel of the Kingdom with loving fulness, is made plain by their own words, “Now, we believe and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the

world! ” Note their words, not the Messiah of Israel, but the “Saviour of the world.”

First Instruction by Miracles. When we stop to think of the measureless superhuman powers of the Christ, there is nothing more impressive than the frugality with which He uses them;—except His constant refusal to make miracles the source of Man’s faith instead of its reward and blessing. “Go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole,” “As thou hast believed, so be it unto thee.” So speaks the Son of Man, over and over again.

Our Lord came into the world to reveal God to man. He did this by His words, His works, His personality. There is no *essential* difference between what we call Christ’s “teaching” and Christ’s “Miracles.” In their relation to the will of the Father, and the work of the Son, they are one; differing only in the method of their manifestation. The Son’s manifestation of His superhuman knowledge of the Father’s love, we call “truth.” His superhuman knowledge and use of the Father’s power, we call “Miracles.” They are both the expression of the Son’s superhuman knowledge. They are both used in the same moral sphere, and for the same moral end,—*the restoring of man to his normal relation to God.*

The man who has lost his right relation to God, either in soul or body, is the man who is being lost. The supreme mission of the Son is to restore man to his normal relation to the Father. The Son may do this by using His superhuman knowledge of the Father’s love, or the Father’s power; but in neither case will He do it without the desire and co-operation of man.

God created man in physical and spiritual perfection. He created also what we call “physical and spiritual law ”

(the expression of His love) to keep man in that normal condition. Only by a perverse or ignorant use of God's laws can man destroy his health of soul or body. For the Son to use His superhuman knowledge to restore man to the place for which the Father created him, is simply to use His Father's laws for the very end and purpose for which the Father created them. It is just as much a natural act for the Son to restore a diseased body, as for Him to restore a diseased soul; and, measured by the Son's standard, the former is the lesser restoration.

Interpreted by *His life*, the Son's words and deeds differ from each other, not in their end, only in the method of their manifestation. His daily life, His teaching, His works, are parts of one perfect whole. Human and superhuman in His Person, human and superhuman in His teaching, Human and superhuman in His deeds, the life of the Son of Man is a divinely natural consistent, and normal Unity.

First Words and Works at Cana. The Master's words at the wedding feast are few, very few. But when we interpret them by the circumstances under which they were spoken they are of startling import. They mark more than the "Beginning of Miracles." They mark the beginning of a separation between domestic and divine duty. They mark the beginning of that cleavage between the accepted teaching of the Scribes, and the new teaching of the Christ, a cleavage which grows wider and wider as the social and humane principles of the Kingdom became manifest. The Cana incident contradicted the Jews' fundamental conception of religion. It defied the teaching of the Pharisees; for every Jew had from childhood been taught that "Religion" meant, what the word "Pharisee" meant, namely, "Separation."

The holiest men were those who were the most completely separated from all places, things, and persons that were not "religious." The Baptist was a holy man, therefore he lived apart from all men. When the Messiah came He would be more holy, therefore more separated from all that was common and unclean, i. e. non-religious. But for one who did *not* separate himself from the unrighteous, a wine bibber, a friend of sinners, claiming to be the Messiah,—out upon it! To think it is a sacrilege!

"Woman, what have I to do with thee?" "Woman" The term was loving and tender, the protest was gentle, yet it was a reminder that the day had passed when His duty called Him to ignore His "Father's business," and go in subjection to Nazareth. Family relations might bind others, but for Him there was only One who could direct His activity.—His Father in Heaven. It was the first definition of the limitation of that holy and human relationship which had hitherto shaped and blessed His earthly life. Later He made the meaning of His words more clear. (Mark. 3:31-35).

It was after His teaching in Jerusalem and Samaria that the Son of Man again returns to Cana. A nobleman comes beseeching Him to go down to Capernaum and heal his child. The Son of Man avoided a faith founded on miracles. In the Temple's courts the Rulers had demanded a miraculous sign to prove His authority. He had refused to thus degrade His mission. He also refused to trust the multitudes that followed because they saw His miracles of healing. To Nicodemus, who confessed his visit was prompted by the miracles he had witnessed, the Master presented the most difficult truths of the Kingdom. The Samaritans alone were not miracle-seekers. To them alone He revealed His Messiahship.

“Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.” The words of the Master have a ring of sorrow. He is spiritually weary of the cry for a miraculous demonstration of His power. The Master’s words intensified the Nobleman’s entreaty. Oh, Rabboni, come with me. “Come down ere my child die.” “Go thy way, thy son liveth.” Our Lord refuses to go to Capernaum, refuses to allow the father to see a visible miracle, yet says—Thy prayer is granted! The father’s faith triumphed over sight, he accepts the Master’s word alone; his absent son is restored “that very hour.”

The Master’s Claim at Nazareth and Its Results. The Galileans were proud of their prophet. They gave Him their admiration, they gloried in His fame. He is welcomed at Nazareth. He takes His former place at the synagogue lectern, reads from the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah, and begins to explain it. His words are gracious; they are listened to with wonder and admiration. But what is this! The carpenter’s son applying the prophet’s portrait of the Messiah to *himself*? Sacrilege! But listen, listen to him!

“Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah . . . when great famine was throughout the land. But unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.”

Why this carpenter is putting himself beside Elijah and Elisha! He is putting unclean Gentiles above the Children of Abraham! He is teaching that heathen dogs have a

place in the Kingdom of our Messiah; a place above us! His blood be upon his own pate! (Luke 4; 29.)

The first stage of our Lord's teaching is ended, ended by the rejection of Himself and His teaching. Well says St. John, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The inspired words are true of the whole ministry of the Son of Man. As the first stage ended, so each subsequent stage ended, in the rejection of the Divine Teacher and His teaching.

We have studied the brief record of this period more in detail than our space will allow us to do with any other. We have done so for two reasons. (a) As the first of a series of periods I wanted to help you to understand and follow historical methods of study; to acquire the ability to get away from the printed page and enter into the historic conditions; to become yourself a part of the environment in which the Master is teaching, and so get His point of view, and enter into the atmosphere in which the Jews lived and listened. For only thus can we receive the Master's message to Israel. His teaching holds for us a larger, a much larger message than it conveyed to His first hearers. Yet the Master's message to us cannot contradict His message to His own race. If *our interpretation* of His words is out of harmony with His original message, then it contradicts the teaching of the Master.

The Essential Message of this Period is the same for the Jew and for the Christian. History and experience have flooded the Master's words with a light that was not on them in the days of Judaism. Ours is a larger message, yes, and a larger responsibility. Yet we are in danger of failing to comprehend the greatness of our blessing. We are so familiar with the words of the Master that we often

fail to realize what a spiritual revolution they have wrought throughout the whole world of thought and life.

The key-words of this period are "Spirituality," "Sociality" and "Universality." The ideas for which they stand were Christ's ideas; they were foreign to Jewish thought. The life of the typical Jew contradicted His teaching. The Jew was steeped in legalism, gloried in his exclusiveness, and was proud of his ecclesiasticism.

Spirituality. At the Temptation, the Master depended upon spiritual bread, spiritual care, and spiritual force alone to win the world for God. It was the spiritual character of the Kingdom, of its subjects, of its birth, of its life that was emphasized by the Master. It was of life's spiritual water, of man's spiritual worship, of His own spiritual meat and drink, of the waiting spiritual harvest that our Lord discoursed beside the well of Jacob. And at Nazareth His first words are "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me."

Sociality began when the Master began to call men. His followers were not servants nor monks, but His friends; were such long before they were Apostles. Social duties were plainly acknowledged at Cana, while caste was as plainly ignored. It was the "servants" who "knew" of the Master's power, hidden from governor and guest. The same condemnation of caste is plainly taught at Jacob's Well when our Lord trained a woman, a sinner, a Samaritan! to be His first missionary. We dare not say "foreign missionary," for to Him no land, no man, no needy soul is foreign. Yet the subordination of the highest domestic relations to divine obligations is clearly taught by His words to the Holy Mother at Cana.

Universality was the note of His first instruction. Nathanael was called to follow, not a Jewish Christ but the

Universal Christ. Nothing could more clearly reveal the universal character of the Kingdom than the outward contradictions and inward unities of the Master's two personal instructions. A Kingdom comprehensive enough to ignore every line of earthly distinction between a learned and titled officer of the Jewish Nation, and an outcast and despised Samaritan; and then reveal to each the very heart of the New Gospel, is certainly a Universal Kingdom. It was the Son of Man's insistence upon this universality at Nazareth which cost Him His rejection—and almost His life.

Because this is the beginning of the Master's teaching, the foundation period of His whole ministry, He emphasizes those truths for which His Kingdom must stand or fall. There is no essential truth in all the later teaching of the Son of Man which does not find its beginning in this period. "Spirituality, Sociality, Universality," we accept these as the key-words of the Master's teaching. Have we also accepted the ideals of life and duty for which they stand?

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

The next period is the most aggressive one in the Master's ministry. Do not read the following chapter until you have prepared yourself to grasp the greatness of its subject. In what ways would you expect Capernaum's conditions to differ from Jerusalem's? In what ways would you expect the Master's methods to differ? Make notes of the differences you discover.

Read St. Luke 4:31 to 5:16. Try to *see* the new life and *feel* the new activity. What was its effect upon the Jews? Read St. Mark 2:1 to 3:6. St. Mark is a close observer of every move and look of Christ, are you? Read St. Mark again and make his pictures your own. Explain the difference between St. John 1:35-51, St. Mark 1:16-20, and St. Luke 6:12-19. St. Luke 7:1 to 8:56 is the record of the Missionary schooling of the Twelve; read it rapidly for its pictures and its unity of purpose. Then read it slowly to grasp its spiritual message—to you. Read St. Matthew 14:13-23, and St. Mark 6:30-46. Why was this the *crisis* of Christ's Ministry? (St. John 6:14-15.)

CHAPTER VII.

TEACHING IN THE PERIOD OF ORGANIZATION.

THIS period extends from Our Lord's departure from Nazareth to His rejection at Capernaum. The time covered is about fifteen months. The field is Galilee. Humanly speaking, it is the happiest period of the Master's ministry. It is the period in which we see most clearly the plan of His life-work, and the essentials of the Kingdom. He found Himself in a new moral atmosphere. The Galileans were eager to listen. For Him to teach was a joy.

The Conditions under which He taught are themselves instructive. Judea was aristocratic, exclusive, steeped in the traditions of the Temple. The Scribe and the Pharisee dominated its thought, and degraded its worship. Its religious atmosphere was stagnant with self-conceit and self-righteousness. In Galilee there was an atmosphere of freedom. The people were open-minded, warm-hearted, patriotic, and given to hospitality. There were nine or more flourishing cities on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. They were the centers of active trade and industry. Fisheries, potteries, dye-houses and glass-works gave employment to multitudes. The Son of Man chose for "His own City", one that brought Him into contact with "Fisher-man's Clubs", "Ass Drivers' Associations" and "Fuller's Unions", in touch with the moral and commercial problems of a thriving city.

The Constructive Unity of This Period is unmistakable. In Capernaum, the Master's words fall upon the ears of sympathetic listeners and enthusiastic followers. He feels the inspiration that comes from a morally tonic atmosphere. He adapts His words to the new attitude of His hearers. He moves among them with trustfulness. He teaches with greater freedom. He reveals more clearly the aim and purpose of His Kingdom. The Baptist had preached a coming Kingdom; the Son of Man is working that there may be a Kingdom already come.

The Master's Words are Actively Constructive. His co-ordinate words and deeds are organic. With emphasis unmistakable, He declares the spiritual nature of His Kingdom. By quieter, but no less certain deeds He prepares for its organic perpetuation among men. In this period, more plainly than elsewhere, we see the progressive character of His revelation. He does not teach even His own disciples the divine nature of His Messianic office; He allows the truth to come to them gradually, through association with Him in labor and instruction. To have proclaimed a divine Messiahship *before He had lived it*, would have been fatal to all His plans.

The Period as a Whole includes four stages of educational and Messianic activity. (a) The first is preparatory. Our Lord officially calls His disciples, and trains them by a missionary tour throughout Galilee. (b) Then from this body of instructed disciples, He selects and appoints a smaller body called Apostles. In the Sermon of the Mount He instructs them in the moral and spiritual principles of the Kingdom. (c) During a second Missionary tour, the Twelve are trained in the field for their work as officers of the Kingdom.

(d) After a third tour with their Divine Teacher, the Apostles are sent out alone with authority and power.*

The Methods of The Master are adapted to the new conditions under which He works. Therefore they differ from those of the preceding period. Then, His words were preparing men to see the difference between physical and spiritual truths. Now He is preparing them to understand the spiritual truth, and to enter into the joy of its freedom. So far as His followers are able to bear it, His constructive word is followed by His constructive deed.

The Master would have His listeners remember His words. Therefore, He puts His teaching into short, pithy sayings. In form they resemble the "Wisdom" literature of the Old Testament with which His hearers are already familiar. He calls them "These sayings of Mine." He begins with what we call "The Beatitudes", and His hearers find them easy to remember.

Because some of His hearers do not want to know the truth, and seek to pervert it, He began to speak in parables; a method whose beautiful simplicity fixes the story even in the mind of a child, and its truth in the heart of a man. But the parables were stumbling-blocks to those who followed the Pharisees' Jesuitical evasions of the truth.

The Subject of the Master's Teaching often seems to grow out of the passing conditions under which He speaks. In reality His words are interpretations of such conditions in their relation to the Kingdom of God. The principal topics of His teaching during this period are (a) The Good News of the Kingdom. (b) The Spiritual Freedom of the Kingdom. (c) The Spiritual Foundations of the Kingdom.

* For Scripture authority for these statements, see "How to Study the Life of Christ," Chapters VII and VIII.

(d) The Spiritual Mission of the Kingdom. (e) The Spiritual Authority of the Kingdom, and (f) the Heavenly Bread of the Kingdom.

The Good News of the Kingdom. The note of the New Gospel which surprised the Galileans, was its positiveness. The Scribes were constantly quoting the sayings of earlier teachers. Often their opinions clashed and the listeners were left in doubt. Our Lord neither quoted, nor argued. He uttered His own unsupported word as God's truth. Do you wonder that His listeners exclaimed—"He teaches as one having authority and not as the Scribes!" Its second surprising quality was its power. The people "were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him." (Mark 1:27.)

"The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15.) The Baptist's work is done, and the fearless preacher imprisoned. Jesus is doing Messianic Work. "The Kingdom of God" on His lips has a new and larger meaning. The Baptist's was an Old Testament message; Christ's is a New. The words of John were almost a threat. The words of Christ (interpreted by His deeds) are a loving entreaty. John's word cries, "Escape from death." The words of Christ call for a new heart, and a new life. Do you wonder that the strangeness of the Master's words and deeds astonished and aroused all Galilee?

The Spiritual Freedom of the Kingdom. The Son of Man was thrust out of Nazareth for teaching the universality of the Kingdom. There were those in Capernaum who would gladly have thrust Him out of that city for teaching

the spiritual freedom of the Kingdom. To the paralytic He said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." "Blasphemy!" cries Scribe and Pharisee. To the cleansed leper He said, "Offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded." Sullen silence from the Pharisees. Bitterly denounced for eating with sinners, He answered, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." Condemned for not keeping Jewish fasts, He replies, "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." (Matt. 9: 15.)

His hungering disciples pluck and eat the wayside grain on the Sabbath. The Pharisees condemn them as lawbreakers. Then their Master replies, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath," (Mark 2: 27, 28) In the synagogue He asks, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace." (Mark 3: 4) Then to one with a withered hand He said, "Stretch forth thy hand." The Pharisees secretly replied, "*How* can we destroy Him?"

These incidents are many. The moral question involved is only one, and the Master's answer is one. He has already taught us that there are great commandments and lesser ones; and that moral obligations are greater than ceremonial obligations. Christ came to fulfil all law, its spirit always; its letter when such fulfilment did not conflict with moral law. We see this plainly when He says to the leper—"Go, show thyself to the priests."

But the Pharisees placed the ceremonial law above the moral. They taught their followers to break moral law if

it conflicted with ceremonial observance. It was this perverse and immoral teaching which the Master denounced; for it contradicted the Word of His Father, the teaching of the prophets, the spiritual liberty of the Kingdom of God.

If the Messiah were not at liberty to help the weak soul, to feed the hungry soul, to heal the sick soul, or to save the sinner because it interrupted a ceremonial observance, then what had become of the foundation of all religion, man's duty to God, and man's duty to His neighbor?

Again and again the Master sums up this whole matter in the pithy words, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." So had taught God's prophets, so teaches God's Son. First, love to God, and mercy to man; afterwards, ceremonial observance. The disciples of the Baptist were keeping Jewish fast days. Our Lord rebukes them, not for so doing, but for their narrowness in joining the Pharisees in calling His own disciples lawless because they did not the same. He claims for His own the spiritual liberty of the New Kingdom. Yet, with prophetic vision, He sees the day coming when His own will be left alone, and adds, "then shall they fast."—Fast, not from restraint, but from love.

The Spiritual Nature of the Kingdom is emphasized in this and in every period of our Lord's ministry. He who would enter the Kingdom must be born of the Spirit. She who would never thirst must drink of living water. They who would never hunger must eat of a meat which even His disciples cannot purchase. All who would worship God must do it in truth and spirituality. The essential nature of the Kingdom is unmistakable. Christ came to found a kingdom for man's salvation. The essential nature of man is spiritual, the nature of the kingdom *must* be the same.

God, however, did not create man an invisible spirit. He

gave man an outward and visible body, and put him upon an outward and visible earth. Therefore, when the Son builds upon earth a Kingdom from God for man's salvation, we know that it will be perfectly adapted to the nature of man for whom it was created. It will fit, and appeal to, nourish, strengthen, and develop every part of man's nature. It will be a Kingdom that ministers to man's body as well as man's spirit. Could a Kingdom that was wholly internal and invisible do this?

The circumstances under which the Son of Man taught, conditioned His words. His hearers expected a new kingdom, were ready on the slightest encouragement to rise and proclaim Him their king, but the kingdom they expected was political. The king they wanted was a revolutionist. It was plainly impossible at this stage for the Son of Man to teach of the earthly and human side of His Kingdom without being misunderstood, without ruining His life-work. So He taught of the Kingdom's spiritual relation to God and man. But of its necessary relation to the physical conditions under which every human spirit lives, He did not teach. *He did more than teach.* HE ACTED.

The Outward Organization of the Kingdom. The Kingdom was not an accident, not a makeshift, not an afterthought. The Son came from the Father to found the Kingdom of His Father, to restore men to His Father. Not simply the men of His own land and generation, but the men of all lands and all generations. He was Himself to die after three years of ministry. He knew this. Yet His mission was to restore souls to God, unto the world's end. Therefore He must organize a Kingdom to continue His work after He had left the earth. From the first day of His ministry He began to lay the foundation of His King-

dom. His every word and act in the first period of His ministry was a preparation for organization.

When He removed to Capernaum His plans were revealed by His deeds. He finds by the Galilean lake those who had followed Him on the banks of the Jordan. He calls them again, not merely to follow but to become trained fishers of men, missionaries of the Kingdom. As He called the fishermen from their nets, so He called Matthew from his toll booth. Now the hour has come for another step. Gathering all His disciples together, He chooses twelve whom He appoints Apostles.

The choice of the Twelve marks the beginning of a new and larger constructive activity. The field is white for the harvest. From every side, and at all hours, a multitude of heart-hungry, soul-hungry, and bodily-diseased, are pressing upon the Christ to be made whole. But the bitter enmity of Jewish leaders from Jerusalem is making His work more and more difficult. It becomes necessary, to meet the needs of the hour, that the King should have a staff of helpers. It is necessary, to meet the needs of the future, that the Kingdom should not be left without leaders when its Head is taken from them; and for both reasons it is doubly necessary that those who are to be officers and teachers in the Kingdom, should be fully trained and prepared for their new duties.

In this new constructive activity, we see the gradual disclosure of the earthly plans, and eternal purposes of the Son of Man. But the vision of the Apostles is far below the vision of the Christ. They are expecting the sort of kingdom that their fathers expected. The Messiah has given His Kingdom its first outward and visible form. The disciples are filled with eager and earthly expectations.

What is the Messiah's next step? To explain this outward and visible form? No—, to emphasize anew the Kingdom's unworldly and fundamentally spiritual nature. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven;" and this, and every beatitude which follows it, contradicted the political hopes and earthly ambitions of the new officers of the long expected Kingdom.

The Spiritual Life of the Kingdom is set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the ordination sermon of the Apostles, the practical working constitution of the Kingdom; the practical principles by which every member of it must shape his conduct, and direct his life. The Master's words mirror the Master's Kingdom. The first and last of the Beatitudes present the supreme reward of earthly faithfulness. The promises between point to different aspects of that blessedness. Plainly the ideal "child of God" presented by the Beatitudes, contradicts the standards of Christ's day, and of our own. A character that has for its root, poverty of spirit, and for its fruitage, persecution for righteousness' sake, is as unwelcome now as then. And yet the Beatitudes are simply the character and conduct of Jesus of Nazareth, translated into human words for the instruction of the members of His Kingdom.

To all who are members of His Kingdom He says: Ye are spiritual salt, keep ye the world from spoiling. Ye are spiritual light, reflect ye the glory of God. The ancient Law must not be broken nor the Prophets denied; ye are to fill them with My truth. Ye are to teach others to fulfil them—not according to the standards of the Scribes. "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matt. 5:20.)

My standard is not the outward deed but the inward motive. Hate is a desire to kill. Lust is adultery in the heart. To be estranged from thy brother is to make worthless thy gift at God's altar. Doth thy right eye, or thy right hand make thee to sin—destroy it, lest it destroy thee. Hate not. Love thine enemies, and pray for them. Are not ye the Children of your Father in Heaven?

As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. Be righteous before God, not before men. Thy Father seeth thy secret alms, thy prayers and fastings. He shall reward thee. Deposit thy wealth and thy heart with thy Father in Heaven. No man can serve both God and Mammon. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. Be not anxious for your life, its food, nor its clothing; is not God the bird's Husbandman, and the Creator of the lilies' glory. Will He not much more care for His own? Shun hypocrisy. Search not for moles in the eye of thy brother, but for beams in thine own.

In the Lord's Prayer the Master holds before His pupils the portrait of that true disciple which they must pray to become. He is one who loves, and humbly seeks His Heavenly Father's presence; who on earth, by speech and conduct makes holy His Father's name; who, by loyal word and generous deed, lives to hasten the coming of the Kingdom; who daily strives to fulfil his Father's will on earth, as the angels fulfil it in Heaven; who daily seeks from God bread to nourish both his body and spirit; who forgives every son of His Father as sincerely as he prays to be forgiven; who shunning every temptation both of soul and body, daily keeps himself from evil by fleeing to the footstool of His Father in Heaven.

Ask, and a blessing shall be given unto you. Seek and

ye shall find the gift from above. The earthly father giveth not his hungering child a stone for a loaf ; *how much more* shall your Father above give you, not the stone of your self-seeking prayer, but the nourishing loaf of His love. Seek ye not the easy but the difficult way, for its end is life. Beware of false prophets. Do corrupt teachers bring forth purity ? Therefore, by their fruits ye shall know their worth. Not he that crieth "Lord, Lord !" entereth into heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father. He that doeth My words foundeth his house on the rock of truth ; whoso doeth them not buildeth his house on shifting sand and destroying flood.

When Jesus had finished the multitudes were astonished. For the Master presented these basic principles of His kingdom, principles which contradicted His own age, and were to revolutionize all future ages, without an argument or the citation of a single earthly authority. Without apology, or a moment's hesitation, He takes the position of an infallible Teacher of moral and spiritual conduct ; not for Galileans alone, but for all mankind. He calmly claims that His words must be obeyed because they are His. And these new and revolutionary principles, He utters with the absolute authority and certainty of One who speaks elementary and self-evident truths.

The Human Mission of the Kingdom was plainly announced in Christ's words at Nazareth. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind." (Luke 4 : 18.) Now, having chosen the Twelve, and instructed them in the first principles of His Kingdom, He begins His second missionary

tour, and the Apostles' *first training school*. Where does He take them? Not to the wilderness of the Baptist, nor the cloisters of the Rabbis. He takes them to the busy market-place filled with its merchants, waiting laborers, and playing children; to the city gate with its repulsive lepers and blind beggars, its lame, and lazy, and sinful; to the bedside of the dying and the grave of the dead; to the school of submerged souls, the real world where Apostolic work and teaching still needs to be done.

The world seeks, and crowds the schools of brilliant theorists. The Apostles were trained for the work of the Kingdom by actual labor and experience in the missionary field. Here is a partial list of their Master's lessons, lessons addressed to eye and ear, and even more to mind and heart. Christ restores to health the servant of a Roman captain. He restores to life the son of a widow, and restores to faith His imprisoned Forerunner. He restores the soul of a sinful woman. He accepts the offerings of those He has restored and blessed. He teaches that His faithful followers are nearer of kin than those of His flesh. He restores calmness to the sea, and reason to demented demoniacs. He restores life to a Ruler's beloved daughter, sight to blind men, speech to the dumb, and health to the sick. In addition to His special instructions at these many restorations, He, for the first time, teaches by public parables (and private interpretations) the nature and mission of His Kingdom. (Luke 7: 1 to 8: 56.)

Plainly the Kingdom is to restore what man has lost, or sin has destroyed. The Messianic King fulfils His mission by restoring men's bodies to their normal relation to earth, and men's souls to their normal relation to God. Can you conceive of a more blessed mission? Yet in His journey He

enters Nazareth and finds Himself unwelcome, and helpless to save. Do you wonder that He marvelled at their unbelief?

The Authority of the Kingdom always made itself felt in His teaching. Astonished at the Master's doctrines, the people are even more astonished at the positiveness of the Speaker. Whence was this authority? It is the authority of a King in His own Kingdom. In this period occur some of the most striking examples of our Lord's superhuman knowledge of the natural and spiritual forces of the world, and of His authority over them. His healing of the paralytic's soul first, and later healing his body to prove to blaspheming Pharisees that the man's sins were already pardoned ; His deliberately healing a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and His numerous healings and restorations in the presence of His Apostles, are examples of a marvelous superhuman power and authority, object lessons for the people, and for the training His Apostles.

The Living Bread of the Kingdom. Probably no teaching of Our Lord made a deeper impression than His feeding the 5,000. It is the one miracle recorded by all four evangelists. He did not seek the occasion ; it was thrust upon Him by the thronging multitudes. Yet " He knew what He would do." He foresaw its momentous results, the culmination of His popularity, the excitement of thousands whose only Messianic desire was for a king to restore the political glory of Israel. They actually planned to force Him to become their leader in a political conspiracy ! This was the Galilean multitude's sordid return for over a year of the Master's spiritual instruction, and ceaseless ministry of mercy.

It was to representatives of this multitude that He said,

“ Verily, verily. I say unto you, ye seek me because ye ate of the loaves and were filled. Work not for the meat that perisheth.” “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.” “ I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John. 6: 32, 51)

Does it seem strange to you that when the people stumbled at His words, Christ should have added “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you ”? The Master knew that they did not desire a spiritual kingdom, or its spiritual food, so, instead of making His words earthly and easy, He purposely took the opposite course. He sought to convince them that He was not the kind of a king they wanted. His words had the desired effect. They realized His unworldly character and purpose. They had nothing more to do with Him. So completely did they turn their backs upon Him that the rejected King turned to His own little flock saying, “ Will ye also go away? ”

To us the words of Christ should convey His real message. In the first period He taught us that entrance to the Kingdom is by spiritual birth, and that the worshippers sought by His Father are spiritual ones. The present period is crowded with like truths. The Kingdom has indeed received the beginning of an outward and visible form in order to minister to souls then on the earth, yet it is the Kingdom’s spiritual freedom, spiritual foundation, spiritual life, spiritual riches, spiritual motives, spiritual authority, spiritual brotherhood and restoration that the Master has

been constantly emphasizing. It is simply the natural climax of this teaching for Him to declare that the spiritual life can be sustained only by spiritual bread, and that this Bread is Himself.

“I am the Bread of Life ; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” “As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.” “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” (John. 6 : 63.)

Man must be a partaker of Christ's Own Life, or he cannot live the spiritual life of the Kingdom. The hour had not come for the Son of Man to reveal the fulness of sacramental truth. That hour came not until the night on which He was betrayed. Yet His own disciples knew that His mystical words concerned the inward and spiritual life of His Kingdom, and of a means whereby that life was to be sustained. Christ's words “are spirit and are life”; were so when spoken, are so to-day. Their fundamental importance depends not upon the sacrament which to-day expresses them, but upon Him who uttered them. The answer of the Apostles emphasized this truth. “Lord, Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

It was the Messiah's insistence upon the *universality* of His Kingdom which caused His rejection at Nazareth. It is a like insistence upon its *spirituality* which causes His rejection at Capernaum, and ends this period of His ministry, and its instruction.

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

In what part of the Master's ministry are there no parables? Where do you find them? Why not earlier? Did they just happen? Or were they

planned for? Recalling past chapters will aid you to answer. Why did the Master use parables? Read St. Matt. 13:1-9. Read again and again until you see the picture with shut eyes. Then study it and interpret it, making notes of the result. Then compare your notes with the Master's, St. Matt. 13:10-23. What does He make the *essential* truth of the parable?

In the same way study St. Matt. 13:24-30. Use its *central* truth as the key, and interpret the parable, making notes of result. Compare your notes with St. Matt. 13:34-43. Why are the parables so very variously interpreted? Turn back and re-read pages 8 and 15.

CHAPTER VIII.

PARABLES IN THE PERIOD OF ORGANIZATION.

IF you are familiar with the Gospels, you cannot think of the Master's teaching without thinking of His parables. If you read a modern parabolic attempt your thought flies back to the perfect parables spoken beside the Galilean Lake. But if to-day this method attracts both child and man, much more did it captivate and throw its spell over Oriental peoples; for with them imagination is more nimble-footed than reason, and prepares the way for its logical conclusions. In His parables the Master Teacher gives a perfect example of what He taught His disciples to do (Matt. 13: 52). He brings forth out of the treasure house of His wisdom, "things both new and old." He uses what is familiar and attractive to introduce truths that are strange, or unwelcome. He builds His parables upon the *likeness* of the old everyday truth to the new truth of the Kingdom. And what is all our modern talk about the basic principles of pedagogy but a re-statement of the matchless educational methods of the Master.

The Place of the Parable in Christ's Ministry is often misunderstood. There is a popular idea that Christ used this method throughout His entire ministry. That when He taught, and what He taught was decided by some passing occurrence, or chance questioner. This is a grave mis-

take. Neither the Master's life nor ministry was without a plan. His teaching was certainly a part of that plan. Nothing was spoken before the time, nothing was spoken except as His disciples, or wayside hearers were able to bear it. During two of the great periods of His ministry there is no recorded parable, and no reference to any unrecorded ones; although these same periods contain references to unrecorded miracles. In every case the Master uses His parable to prepare for or confirm direct teaching. The occasion of His parables is decided by the stage of His teaching. The seemingly chance question is usually prompted by some word of the Master.

The time for the parable was decided by the development of the Master's ministry. During the Preparatory Period (Chap. VI.) both John the Baptist and the Christ were preaching and baptizing for a Kingdom which was "at hand." The Kingdom then existed only in the will, and purpose of the King. There could be no call to use parables to explain the nature of something that had not yet taken form. The direct teaching of the first period laid the foundation for the Kingdom's organization. The parables followed to explain its nature and purpose. As the parables of the Period of Organization could not have been uttered in the first period, so the parables of the third period could not have been spoken in any of the other three periods without contradicting the progressive method of Christ's revelation of His Kingdom.

The Historical Development of Parabolic Teaching is plainly conditioned by the progressive nature of Christ's plan. The three basic truths emphasized by the Son of Man during the Preparatory Period are (a) that His Kingdom is spiritual in its nature (b) social in its activity, and (c) univer-

sal in its purpose. The five parables in the Period of Organization emphasize the first of these truths, the spiritual nature, and priceless value of the Kingdom. The eighteen parables in the Period of Self-revelation emphasize (a) Man's social duties as neighbor and brother in the Kingdom, and (b) the consequences of ignoring such duties.

The Purpose of the Parable in Christ's teaching is as definite as its place. The first parables surprised the disciples. They immediately ask, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" Recall the conditions. The Master had preached the Kingdom in Judea. The Jews were His Father's people, their Temple His Father's Church; yet His words aroused only their enmity. He removes to Capernaum. His first Missionary tour astonishes all Galilee. His activity is felt even in distant Jerusalem. Its Rulers send spies to dog His steps. From this hour until His death Christ faces two audiences, the "common people" hearing Him gladly, the Jewish spies listening to catch, contradict, and condemn. Moreover the time has come to teach concerning the Kingdom. It is a most dangerous subject.

A "new kingdom," to the impulsive Galileans, means revolt against Rome. A "new kingdom," to the Scribe and Pharisee, means revolt against the Hebrew Hierarchy. Christ cannot openly teach the "Kingdom" without being misunderstood. The parable, however, based on the common things of daily life, catches the ear, and gradually instructs the heart of the people. The very simplicity of its words hides from perverted minds the spiritual truths of the Kingdom which Christ desired to impart to honest hearted hearers. In this latter class belonged the Apostles.

It is to be remembered that some of the parables were uttered in private for the disciples only, and that as a rule

the public parables were fully explained to them in private. Frequently the disciples requested an explanation; if they did not, then the Master questioned them. From the very first, the parable had a large place in the schooling of the disciples. In the final period of the Master's ministry (which is very largely devoted to the training of the Twelve) we find more parables than in all the other periods put together.

The Interpretation of Parables is not difficult to honest and humble students. The first step is to discover the principles of their interpretation. Happily for us the Master explained His own parables. Let us study His words. The Master's basic principle is already familiar to us. *All inspired statements must be interpreted historically. The meaning of doubtful words is determined by the conditions under which they were uttered.* This principle is too frequently ignored. We allow the beauty of the parable to mislead us. We think we see its meaning and then unconsciously read into it what is uppermost in our thoughts, desires, or prejudices. The clergyman often begins with its theological meaning, the socialist with its social doctrine, and the untrained reads it for its personal application. This in each case is taking the last step first.

The first question should be (a) what is the *literal meaning* of the parable? i. e. the meaning of its words without any reference to their application. Then (b) what is its *essential* truth? i. e. the one central truth for which it was uttered, and without which it would be meaningless? This last is an historical question. It sends us back to study the conditions under which it was uttered. This is the only method which leads to truth. Next, (c) What lesson had this parable for those who heard it spoken? (d) What lesson

does it convey to us to-day? The lesson for us may in some ways differ from the one it taught the Hebrew multitude. It may be a larger truth and doctrine than even the disciples received; but it *cannot contradict* the essential truths which it conveyed to its first hearers. To reduce to one written sentence the essential truths of a parable will greatly help us to fix it in our minds. Finally, (e) The correctness of our conclusions should be tested by comparing them with the Master's direct and plain teaching on the *same subjects*. Above all, with the teaching by His own blameless life.

Apply the above method to the Parable of the Sower. For historical conditions read the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew, a picture of the Divine Teacher sowing the living seed of the Kingdom. Note the effect of His words as they fall into differing ears and hearts. Note the result of the sowing as pictured in the parable. What decides the fruitage? Not the quality of the seed (God's truth), not the method of the sower (the Son of Man), but the varying conditions of the heart soil upon which it falls.

What were its lessons to those who heard? Study the Master's explanation to His disciples. Does their lesson differ from ours? The essential truth is—Christ's words cannot become spiritually fruitful unless the hearts into which they fall are "honest and true." Compare this conclusion with the direct teaching of the Master on the same subject. Compare the hearers in St. John 7: 5-7, 12, 25-26, 31-32, 40-52, with the hearers in the parable. The three parables which follow that of The Sower are on closely related topics, and therefore throw light upon the one we are studying.

The Parables in the Period of Organization are eight. They are the first spoken by the Master, and therefore are

the ones relating to the basic subject of His teaching the Kingdom. The first five explain the Kingdom's nature, and the method of its growth. The Kingdom is presented as a living organism whose spiritual growth results from the planting of divine seed. The last three parables dwell upon the priceless value, and cost of obtaining the Kingdom. The unity of teaching in the first five parables, is seen in the following outline.

The Nature of The Kingdom of God.

A Spiritual Organism Growing from Divine Seed.

The Divine Seed in its Relation to :—

Its Widely Varying Soils ;—"The Sower."

The Providential Laws of its Growth ;—"Growing Seed."

Its Inevitable Spiritual Enemy ;—"The Tares."

The Wide Extent of its Growth ;—"The Mustard Seed."

The Transforming Power of its Growth ;—"The Leaven."

The picturing of a parable is an art to be cultivated by both reader and teacher. The imagery of a parable is Christ's appeal to man's imagination. We cannot grasp even its form until we can shut our eyes and see the Master's picture, bright, vivid, glowing. The scene of His first parable was the Sea of Galilee. "The most sacred sheet of water which this earth contains." He begins by the seaside, the multitude increases, He steps into a boat, —try to see the Gospel picture.

The boat a few rods from the shore, held by oar or anchor, swings to the rhythm of the waves ; the eager crowds standing upon the shelving sand, heads bent to catch the Speaker's strangely attractive words. The Master sitting in His floating pulpit ; seeing His listeners, and doubtless seeing behind them the different soils of which He is speaking : the hard trodden path between the prepared

ground, bare of fruit; the rocky hillside with its scant soil and withered growth, the clumps of thorn bushes choking all life but their own; and, best of all, the broad, unbroken fields of goodly grain, the faithful sower's joy and reward. When we can shut our eyes and see this, then we are prepared to make others see it.

The Imagery of the Parable has much to do with its interpretation. The first five parables are built upon the imagery of the husbandman. Their truth is based upon what man calls the laws of nature, i. e., the unchanging certainty of God's loving purpose as revealed in the natural world. And because the truth, and the imagery by which it is taught are both from God's field, these five parables are more easy to interpret than all others. In the last three parables of this period (and the eighteen of the following period), the imagery is based upon the daily life of the East. Our ignorance of Oriental manners and customs often causes us to miss the real teaching of the Master.

The Parable of the Growing Seed is given by St. Mark only (4: 26). Here, again, we see the sower scattering good seed. Here, however, it falls into "good ground" only, and all the returns are satisfactory. What law of growth not mentioned in "The Sower" is emphasized here? Brief as this parable is, it has received several names, each based upon what the interpreter considered its main point. Would you call it the "Growing Seed," the "Seed Growing Secretly," the "Blade, the Ear, the Full Corn," the "Fruit-Bearing Earth," or some other name? Where falls the Master's emphasis? Is not the earth's part in the seed's growth the one He emphasized? Does any other of the five agricultural parables call our attention to this point? Read them and see.

The parable presents the picture of a man who prepares his ground, sows good seed, and then lets it alone until harvest. Why? Because as God's man, he believed the earth to be God's earth, and therefore fully empowered to fulfil God's providential laws of growth. He did his own work faithfully; then patiently waited for God to do His work in His own appointed time. Remember all the parables of this period were primarily spoken for the disciples' instruction. They concern the *first truths* of the Kingdom. They were privately explained to the Twelve, and two of these divine interpretations are found in the Gospels.

The Apostles greatly needed this parable. From early childhood they had expected the coming of a Jewish Messiah to found a Jewish political kingdom. And they never got away from these delusions until Pentecost, and one Apostle not even then. During the whole of their schooling the Master's seed-sowing was hurt by their restless looking for an immediate harvest, the sudden restoration of Israel to political supremacy. When at the end of three years of personal training we find them asking "When" the new Kingdom would come, "what" would be their reward, and "where" would be their places of honor, we can well understand the state of their minds at this early stage of their training.

The Parable of the Tares, (Matt. 13: 24) was spoken to correct another erroneous attitude of the disciples. This Period of Organization is the hour of the Messiah's greatest popularity. Capernaum, yea all Galilee is now aroused. The Apostles are exultant, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us! For *this* hour—yes, but the chief of demons is yet to be reckoned with. Now is the time for planting, the harvest is not yet. There is a growing

power in evil seeds as well as in good. There are months before the harvest. Yes, and *for us* every month is a thousand years. We have the Master's own interpretation of this parable. Study it carefully. (Matt. 13: 36.)

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt. 13: 31. Mark 4: 30. Luke 13: 18) was spoken to encourage the disciples and all who would follow in their steps. The enemy might, indeed, use the forces of the earth and man to retard the development of good seed. Yet he cannot stop the ultimate growth of the Kingdom. The minute mustard seed is destined to fill the earth and overshadow all its kingdoms. This is the dominant, and the prophetic truth of the parable. Its words, and the details of its imagery must be interpreted to harmonize with the truth which the Master has made emphatic.

The Parable of the Leaven. (Matt. 13: 33,) like that of the Mustard Seed, presents only one great truth, the growth of the Kingdom. The Mustard tree, however, taught the extensiveness of the Kingdom. This, its intensiveness. The growth of the Mustard was open and visible, that of the Leaven is hidden and secret. The growth of the Mustard plant is to fill the world, that of the Leaven is to permeate, and eventually transform the world. The Leaven presents the invisible nature of the Kingdom as it was working in men's heart when the parable was spoken. The Mustard, the visible nature of the Kingdom as we see it existing in the Acts of the Apostles. This is the last of the five parables devoted to teaching the essential nature of the Kingdom. Can you condense their instruction into a single sentence? Try it. Compare the result with the third line on page 87.

The Priceless Value of the Kingdom is the subject of the

next three parables. We call them The Treasure, The Pearl, and the Net. They are the only ones in which the Master taught the *supreme worth* of the Kingdom. The multitude had no place in this instruction. It was a part of the private schooling of the Twelve. Note also that in this group Christ makes a complete change in the character of His imagery. He no longer finds it in the unchanging laws of nature but in the manners and customs of His own age. In this fertile field He continues to teach until His teaching is done. The unity of the three parables is seen in this outline :

The Kingdom of God.

[*The Supreme Purpose and Attainment of Life.*

To secure :—

A Treasure, Worth all that a man possesses. “ The Treasure.”

A Pearl, Worth a man's Life-long search. “ The Pearl.”

A Goodness, accepted and honored by God. “ The Net.”

The Hid Treasure (Matt. 13 : 44) presents the Kingdom in a new aspect. It is no longer a seed, a growth, or a fruitage, but a priceless possession which must be personally acquired. The imagery is built upon a common occurrence in Oriental lands, the finding of treasure-trove. The parable is a perfect picture of the conditions and customs amid which Christ's hearers were living. It at once caught and held their attention. The hero of the story discovers the treasure accidentally. He was not looking for it, but he instantly recognizes its great value. He turns all he possesses into money and buys the field to obtain the treasure. To part with his every earthly possession is a great sacrifice, but a glad one. He sells all minor treasures that he may obtain the supreme one, the Kingdom of God. Do you recall any

man who found this treasure and later sold it for a contemptible sum?

The Pearl of Great Price (Matt. 13 : 45) teaches the same truth in a different way. In the former parable it is the treasure that finds the man. Here it is the man who finds the pearl. It was not a chance finding. The merchant was *seeking for the best pearls*. He instantly recognizes the value of the one offered him. He sells all his other pearls, yea, everything he owns and buys it. The pearl is to him worth all his life-long search; more than all his other riches. He has obtained the most precious of all pearls, the Kingdom of God is his. He is more than satisfied. The Parable brings before our mind the picture of another earnest seeker for "goodly" pearls. He was offered this very pearl, the one Christ had in mind when He uttered the parable. But the seeker was unwilling to pay the price! Did all his inferior pearls satisfy him? (Mark 10 : 17-22.)

The Drag-Net (Matt. 13 : 47) in its essential truth resembles the parable of the Tares. But it differs from the Tares both in its imagery, and in its point of view. It is its view-point which relates it to the Treasure, and the Pearl, makes it a fitting climax to the three parables on "The Supreme Good."

The Galilean fishermen sometimes use a line, sometimes a hand net, and sometimes the great drag-net, which, hauled through the deep water, encloses all fish within its reach, large and small, good and bad. Not until the great net has been dragged to the shore can the fishermen pick out the good, and throw the bad away. But what is "the good"? It is not an outward treasure which all men see and value. It is not a perfect pearl which appeals only to the experienced. It is an inward quality. It is a concealed

life and goodness; an inward character which only God and His angels are able to see, and separate from the bad. The supreme purpose and attainment of life, is indeed seen in the priceless treasure, and in the priceless pearl, but most clearly in that priceless character which the angels shall separate from all evil and give a place in the eternal Kingdom.

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

Before reading the next chapter try to answer (from earlier studies) the following questions. Where was the Master's home during the Period of Preparation? Where during the Period of Organization? Where during the next Period? What was the relation of Christ's Kingdom to the Hebrew Church? Did our Lord ever denounce men? If so, what class, or classes? Why? What method of worship is acceptable to God? Which part of the Master's ministry is most largely given to the schooling of the Twelve? Why did they need special training? Study Mark 9:33-34, and Matt. 18:2-6. Did Christ call, or reject men? What does He do to-day? (Luke 9:50 and 11:23). Did Jesus claim to be divine? Study carefully the eighth chapter of St. John, also Matt. 26:63 to 66. For what crime was Christ crucified? (John 19:6-8).

CHAPTER IX.

THE PERIOD OF SELF-REVELATION.

THIS Period extends from the Son of Man's rejection at Capernaum to His rejection at Jerusalem. The time covered is about thirteen months.

The conditions under which Christ taught are not those of earlier periods. During the larger portion of this period the Master was a homeless wanderer, seeking to avoid Jewish spies and contradictors, that He might finish His work of training the Twelve before He was taken from them. "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." He could not have uttered these words at any other stage of His teaching. They are profoundly true of this one. It is the period of Christ's humiliation.

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So spoke the Father amid the splendors of the Mount of Transfiguration. That was the period of Christ's glory. The present contrast is striking, it is intense—to *us*. To the Son of Man? We must remember that the standards of heaven are not those of earth. Christ's *humiliation* is His glory. His glory is His humiliation.

The Relation of the New Kingdom to the Old Church is gradually revealed. The Master passed it by in the Period of Preparation. Aside from His plain words on the Sabbath

it was hardly touched during the Period of Organization. The hour had now come for its consideration. The Jews were the hereditary children of Abraham. But they will not receive the Messiah of Abraham. The time has come to repudiate their exclusive claims, to proclaim publicly by word and deed the *universality*, the world-wide inclusiveness of the New Kingdom.

The nature of the New Kingdom was central in the Messiah's thought. Yet no other was so difficult to lodge in the minds of His hearers. Generation after generation of false teachers had so preoccupied the minds of the people that there was no room for the truth. In spite of the Master's wonderful words, and vivid parabolic pictures, their vision of the Kingdom was one built on earthly righteousness, for earthly ends, and earthly glory. The disciples are still thinking the thoughts of the people, their religious ideas are those of their childhood.

From Jerusalem came the Pharisees, saying, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread?" Christ answers, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions? Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. . . . Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." (Matt. 15:2.)

These words offended the Pharisees, and astonished the disciples. Their meaning is plain to us. Yet St. Peter said privately, "Declare unto us the parable." The Master is surprised, but He patiently teaches them how impossible it is for a man's food to pollute his heart. Only that which

is *morally* unclean can defile the soul. “For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile a man.” (Mark 7: 21–23.)

It is an impressive testimony to the tenacity of childhood’s earliest lessons that the Apostle who asked for this explanation was the one who eight years later had to receive a special vision from heaven to interpret to him the real meaning of the explanation which he had received.

The sternness of Christ’s words in repelling the Pharisees arises from the fact that He is speaking to the men who were responsible for the moral and religious degradation of the Jewish Church. He denounced them, not for their multitudinous additions to the original Law, not because their tyranny rested only on their own vain traditions, but because their traditions substituted ceremonial cleanness for personal purity, contradicted the holy purpose of the Law, and made empty and worthless God’s demand for justice, mercy, and righteousness.

The teaching of the ancient prophets demanded a religion not of hand and lip, but of the heart and life. Certainly the New Kingdom could demand no less. It is not the outward ceremonial that sanctifies the heart, but the pure heart that sanctifies the outward ceremonial. It is the spiritual quality of worship, which makes it acceptable to God, and a blessing to the worshipper. Christ does not concern Himself with the presence, or the absence of outward forms, but with their spiritual sincerity and truth.

There never has existed a religion that did not express itself outwardly. The sad side of this truth, the one that

grieved the heart of the Master, is that in every age, the tendency of man has been to put the outward expression above the inward spirit; to substitute human traditions for divine ordinances. But to the honest student of His words nothing is more plain than the wise carefulness with which the Divine Teacher discriminates between the use and abuse of religious forms.

Realize the historical conditions; for by them we must interpret Christ's words. The Old Church was God's Church. Into it Jesus was admitted in His infancy. In it He and His disciples were worshippers. Sacrifices and ceremonials, feasts and fasts, came from God. Christ honored them as such. But the false teachers of God's ancient Church were making it the very opposite of what God intended. Not a divine help, but a human hindrance to righteousness. Not a center of truth, but of hypocrisy; not a House of Prayer, but a den of thieves. The attitude of the Son is plain. He reverently honors the Church of His Father; He sternly denounces those who are degrading its teaching and polluting its worship.

Christ's position is made clear even in His severest denunciations. "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works. (Matt. 23 : 2, 3.) "For all their works they do to be seen of men," "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithes of mint, and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matt. 23 : 23.)

Could the charity of justice, amid stern denunciation, be more beautifully manifested? Man may sneer at his neigh-

bor's "contemptible littleness" or even "hypocrisy" in tithing his peppermint and anise seed, yet with perfect and divine appreciation, the Master commends devout faithfulness even in the smallest of religious expressions.

The same divine discrimination is made manifest in His different answers to like questions. To Him came the Pharisees, saying, "When will the Kingdom of God come?" His answer is, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation." You will not find it by watching for something outward, by demanding a sign for its authority, or by seeking it in formal observances. The Kingdom of God is within you. If you find it not there, you will find it nowhere.

To the same Christ came the disciples. "Lord, teach us to pray. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come," (Luke 11: 1, 2). In other words, He gave them what they desired, a form of prayer, by the use of which they might hasten the advent of the Kingdom. To the Pharisee who did not desire the Kingdom, Christ said, "Look into your own hearts. To the disciples, who did desire it, He said, use this form of prayer for the coming of the Kingdom. The gulf between the old and new Kingdom is not to be found in the outward observance, but in the inward motive, in the spirit of the worshipper.

For Himself and for His disciples, Christ claimed absolute freedom from the ecclesiastical obligations of the Temple. When St. Peter, with characteristic impulsiveness, committed himself and his Lord to the payment of the annual Temple Tax, Christ at once repudiated the obligation. "The Law and the Prophets were until John, since then the Kingdom of God is preached." The sons of the New Kingdom

“are free” from the ecclesiastical claims of the Temple. Yet with loving consideration for St. Peter and all like him, Christ sent the mortified fisherman to get the required silver that he might make good his own hasty words: and, more important still, that they might not, by their own freedom cause any devout Hebrew to offend. Plainly the freedom of the Kingdom was not freedom to become a stumbling-block to others. (Matt. 17: 24-27.)

The same perfect moral balance was displayed by the Master in the preceding period when He claimed for His disciples freedom from the ecclesiastical fasts of the ancient Church. But many who read the Master's words, do not follow His careful discrimination. The place of fasting as a religious act was not under consideration. That it had a place is taken for granted both by Christ and by the Pharisees. But the freedom of His disciples from the obligation of Jewish fasts, Christ plainly affirmed. That a time would come when His disciples should fast, he also affirmed with equal clearness. (Matt. 9: 14, 15.)

You remember that the Messiah was rejected at Nazareth for claiming that the New Kingdom was as comprehensive as the Church of the ancient prophets, which ministered to Gentiles as well as to Jews. Now, rejected at Capernaum, the Messiah of Israel makes Himself the Messiah of the Gentiles. He teaches in their cities, heals multitudes of their sick, and gives His loaves and fishes to needy heathen. And it was a great multitude of “heathen dogs” (whose sick had been healed) that did what the sons of Jerusalem did not do, they “glorified the God of *Israel*.” (Matt. 15: 21-37.)

It was to bigoted sons of Abraham, who counted all others “sons of perdition,” that the Master spoke the warning

parables of "The Two Sons," "The Wicked Husbandman," and the "King's Marriage Feast." Their lesson Christ condensed in the words, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Yea, "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matt. 21 : 31, 32, 43.)

The Training of the Twelve began as soon as they were appointed to the Apostleship. The Sermon on the Mount was spoken, first of all, for the Twelve, then for all who should believe through them. The missionary tour upon which Christ immediately took them, (recall its manifold restorations of body and soul) put before the Apostles, as no words could have done, the *mission* of the Kingdom. Yet a year later we find them clinging to selfish ambitions which blind their eyes and dull their ears to the sublime purpose of their Master—whom they devoutly love, often misunderstand, and sometimes fear.

This is the state of mind in which the Twelve begin their final year with the Master. He knew the nearness of His death, the great responsibilities soon to fall upon them. This knowledge makes *their* training His dominant purpose. Even when His words are addressed to others, they are, by personal instruction or private interpretation, made a part of the Apostles' training. The miracles, bringing life and blessing to others, were to the Twelve object lessons of a measureless mercy that never could be forgotten. Such miracles as the shekel in the fish's mouth, walking on the water, and the destruction of the barren fig-tree, were a part of the *private* schooling of the Apostles. Later they remembered their Master's words! "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see."

That was a sublime confession made by the spokesman of the Twelve at Cæsarea Philippi, more so than the speaker himself realized; for when (a little later) Christ foretold His approaching death, the same impulsive Apostle took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But the Master answered "Get thee behind me, satan; thou art an offense unto me?" (Matt. 16:23.) We think of the Transfiguration as a glorious expression of God's approval, and so it was *to the Son*. But to the leaders of the Twelve it was an instruction, and a rebuke.

"What was it ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace; for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest." (Mark 9:33, 34.) Remember these pupils had been attending the school of Christ for over two years! So "Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth Me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." (Matt. 18:2-6.) Could the Twelve be more plainly taught the glory of child-likeness, and the preciousness of child-life in the New Kingdom?

When the Master at the disciples' request gave them the Lord's Prayer, He explained, only one of its petitions, that on forgiveness. Why? Because He was adapting His teaching to the needs of His pupils. St. Peter thought he

was erecting a magnanimous standard when he said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." The Master's real answer is the parable of the Unmerciful Servant. His application is "So shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matt. 18:21-35.)

We catch a glimpse of *the extensiveness* of the Master's missionary training school when we see Him sending out seventy missionaries at once. Note also their orders. Go not to Gentiles or Samaritans (this is *His own* mission) Go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." (Matt. 10:5-15.) And what is to be their compensation? The scanty food of sheep amid wolves, with hatred, persecutions, scourgings, and possible death. For "the disciple is not above his Master." "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?" (Matt. 10:25.)

Do the words of the Master sound strange to you? When did physical warfare ever promise ease and comfort? Is not the Christ's spiritual warfare against sin, satan, and death the most real of all warfares? There are compensations,—not of this world. The King's orders are spiritual. Ye are ambassadors of the Messiah. "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me. And, whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, shall save it."

We catch a glimpse of *the intensity* the Master's training

in His words: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." The words are spoken to those He is training in righteousness and truth. The men He denounces are also teachers; teachers who made pretenders, evaders, and Jesuits. They are the only class He ever denounced, for they are the only class who were shutting the Kingdom of Heaven against souls by teaching that evil is good and lies are truth, that pretense is prayer and sin is righteousness; that love, mercy and charity are the work of Beelzebub, not the work of the Holy Spirit. They are the only teachers who so utterly perverted souls as to make their salvation an impossibility. Therefore, upon them and their satanic teaching falls the most awful denunciations that ever passed the lips of the all-merciful Son of Man.

Yet in the burning intensity of His love for the helpless children of His Father, who were being made twofold "children of hell" His heart breaks into a pitying cry for the wicked. O mistaught, misled, and sinful souls! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23: 37, 38, 39.)

The Kingdom Calling and Rejecting Men. We all joy in thinking of the universality of the call of Christ. We often forget the human rejections. The kingdom of sin and death is the only one that rejects nobody. Every other organization on the earth has some standard by which men are measured, and accepted, or rejected. At the Jordan

Christ's first call, "Come and see," measured John and Andrew. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God," was the spiritual standard by which Nicodemus was called to acceptance or rejection.

So always, every soul who came into the holy presence of the Son of Man was measured by His standard. In the heart-searching light of that standard every man was revealed to himself. The divine call compelled acceptance or rejection. There was no middle ground. To him who is *indifferent* to the call, the words of the Master are, "He that is not with Me is against Me." (Luke 11:23.) To him who is seeking the Kingdom the Master says, "He that is not against us is for us," (Luke 9:50.) Each is a partial statement. In its larger sense the message is the same to both. There is but one Kingdom of God. The Messiah's claim dominates and excludes all others. In the soul's relation to the Son of God there is *no place for neutrality*. No man ever enters His presence and leaves it unchanged. He is a better man, or a worse. He is (by his own decision) a rejected man or an accepted disciple.

So was the guileless Nathaniel called from his prayer under the fig-tree, and the Samaritan woman from her sins in the city. So in the very courts of the Temple, the Jewish Rulers found their rejection; and in their synagogue worship the people of Nazareth in bigotry and blindness rejected themselves. The fishermen were called from their ships, the hated publican from his booth, the fallen woman from her sins. And in their whole-hearted surrender to the call, they found their acceptance. Yet, in the same period, the Rulers of Israel cry, "Blasphemy!" when the paralytic's sins are forgiven, the pious Scribes condemn

Christ for loving "publicans and sinners," and the Jesuitical Pharisees call Christ's miracles the work of Beelzebub, thus shutting themselves out of the Kingdom.

It is in this period of Christ's divine claims that the invitation of the Kingdom becomes unmistakably a call to judgment, a challenge to accept or reject Him who is the soul's Light and Life. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And one replies, "I will follow Thee, Lord, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home. But Jesus answers, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9: 61, 62.) Another said, "I will follow, but, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." Jesus answers, "Follow me; and let the dead [in heart] bury their dead [in body.]" (Matt. 8: 21, 22.)

The Call of the Kingdom is *absolute*. It is the highest of all calls, "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God." The man who would guide the plow of a King, cannot do it with half of his heart. The man who puts domestic obligations above divine ones, is unfitted for the Kingdom. The man who loves his money more than his Master, rejects the Kingdom of God. But even the surrender of all these is not enough. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." (Matt. 18: 9) "It is *better for thee to enter into life.*" This the judgment of Divine Love.

The Divine Nature of the King is revealed in this period as in no other. In the first stage of His ministry, the Master privately revealed His Holy Office to the Samaritan woman. During the second stage, the emphasis of His

teaching fell upon the *nature* of the Kingdom. But the time has now come for the Son of Man to reveal *Himself* to the world. He begins with His own Apostles. "Whom say ye that I am?" The answer of St. Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," finds its supreme importance in the reply of the Master,—“Blessed art thou, Simon-Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 16: 17) It is strikingly characteristic of the Master’s teaching, that He connects His exaltation with His humiliation. He will not allow His disciples to think of His glory apart from His suffering.

So, “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Then calling all His disciples, He said, “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” (Mark 8: 35) “The disciple is not above his Lord.” For both, the only path to blessedness is through the valley of humiliation, and the gate of suffering.

The Son of Man will not glorify Himself. Therefore He is glorified by His Father. The Transfiguration marks the summit of Christ’s ministry. The Apostles, for the first time, hear the voice of God, and see shining through their Master’s earthly body, the dazzling glory of heaven. They are above measure exalted. They desire always to remain amid superhuman brightness. But as they come down from the mountain, their Master said, “Let these words sink into your ears,” “The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed

He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him." (Mark 9:31, 32.)

"Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." (Luke 12:8, 9.) Is it not a prompt, and characteristic fulfilment of this promise that the next revelation of His Messianic Mission is made to a blind beggar who had been cast out of the synagogue because he had dared to confess Him before the browbeating Rulers of Israel?

The Son of Man carefully veils His glory from all save His own trusted followers. But His real nature, His true relation to the Father, is another matter. His hour has come to bear witness before all that the Son of Man is the Son of God. His cross stands out before His eyes. Its shadow already falls upon His heart. His human spirit is saddened. His words take a deeper meaning. As never before His teachings concerns *Himself*, His relation to God and man, to death and life, to time and eternity. His teaching is utterly unlike that of earlier periods. He is no longer a King demanding the obedience and loyalty of His subjects. He is a Saviour seeking to save His people. He is a Divine Deliverer who saves by the Sacrifice of Himself.

He appears at the Feast of Tabernacles. For the first time in His Father's City, and His Father's House, He announces plainly that He is the Son of God. The Rulers and people of Judea may believe or disbelieve, may accept or reject His claims, but they cannot escape hearing them. He puts upon them the responsibility which comes from hearing the truth. He compels them to make a decision.

The multitudes at the feast are discussing His character.

When suddenly upon their ears fall the words—"My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent me." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." (John 7: 14-17.) "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "If I judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me." (John 8: 12-16.) "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world." (John 8: 23.) "If ye continue in My word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8, 31, 32.) "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me." "Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" (John 8: 42-46.)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death." "If I honour Myself, My honour is nothing; it is My Father that honoureth Me; of whom ye say, that He is your God." "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8: 51-56.) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8: 58.) There is no mistaking these solemn and emphatic words. The Speaker is claiming to have existed before Abraham, to have come down from Heaven, to be the Son of God. It is impossible for those who hear such words to assume an attitude of neutrality. They are *compelled* to believe that He is speaking words of divine truth, or words of human blasphemy. The Jewish multitude have already decided that He is speaking blasphemy. They seize stones to destroy Him.

Two months later (at the Feast of Dedication) the Son of Man again appears in the Courts of the Temple. Once

more the people are divided by His divine claims, "Then came the Jews round about Him and said unto Him, how long dost thou make us to doubt? *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.*" Jesus answers, "I told you, and ye believed not. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep." "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." (John 10: 24-31.)

Four months later the Son of Man is arrested for blasphemy. He stands before His accusers. The High Priest presses home the accusation. "I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus calmly answers, "Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The High Priest rends his clothes and cries, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now ye have heard His blasphemy! What think ye?" They answer, "He is guilty of death." (Matt. 26: 63-66.)

His enemies have officially certified to the fact of His divine claims. Their next step is to secure His death for blasphemy. This the High Priests accomplish by solemnly testifying before Pilate, "*By our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God.*" (John 19: 6-8.)

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

What *imagery* does Christ use in the early parables in the Period of Organization? (St. Mk. 4:26. St. Matt. 13:24). Is this imagery used in the Period of Self-Revelation? (St. Matt. 18:15-35. St. Luke, chapter 15). Did the Master ever use the imagery of sin to teach righteousness? Did He ever use an imagery not taken from earth or heaven? (St. Luke, chapter 16). The *purpose* of the parables in the Period of Organization was to show man's relation,—to whom? (St. Mk. 4:13-20. St. Matt. 13:44-50). What relation of man is taught during the Period of Self-Revelation? (St. Luke 10:25-37). What is the relation between Christ's didactic and parabolic teaching? (St. Luke 12:13-34. St. Matt. 13:45-46. St. Mk. 10:17-31). To what class of hearers were the parables spoken? St. Matt. 18:21-35. St. Luke 10:25-37. St. Luke 12:13-21. To whom have the parables the larger message, to Jews or Christians?

CHAPTER X.

EARLY PARABLES IN THE PERIOD OF SELF-MANIFESTATION.

The Order of Parabolic Teaching. The Master revealed truth gradually, as man was able to bear it. He spoke no parables in the preparatory period. The hour for parables had not come. Because the hour had come we found them in the Period of Organization. They were devoted to one subject, the Nature and Value of the Kingdom, the same subject to which His direct teaching was devoted. We have just finished our study of Christ's direct teaching in the Period of Self-Manifestation. Knowing the order and definiteness of the Master's plans we expect to find in His parables the same truths which we found in His didactic instruction. We are not disappointed. The parables of this period are wholly given to teaching Man's Relation to his Neighbor, and to his God.

Remember also that this period is the main one for the training of the Twelve. Christ purposely kept away from the large cities with their friendly crowds, scoffing Scribes, and hypocritical Pharisees. In remote districts, and even in heathen solitudes, He seeks quiet hours for personal instruction. The parables of this period are spoken for Apostolic ears. When this is not the case, the Master turns from the multitude and applies His parables to His own disciples.

The Imagery of the Parables of this Period is based upon the manners and customs of the age in which the

Master spoke. To many readers this presents difficulties not found in earlier study, and demands more careful application that we may grasp the lesson it conveyed to its first hearers. To miss the meaning it had for the disciples is to miss the truth it has for us. Moreover, at this stage of His teaching, Christ dares to do what few teachers have ever done. He uses the customs of the wicked to teach the righteousness of the Kingdom. On the selfishness and meanness of man He builds a parable to teach the perfect love and mercy of God. Let us be prepared to study, not to stumble at this change of imagery.

The Grouping of the Parables of this Period is the historical order in which they were spoken. This corresponds with the order of the Master's didactic teaching. Its twenty parables fall into two groups. The subject of the first twelve is Man's Relation to Man; of the final eight it is Man's Relation to God, and the Final Judgment. Again, the twelve on the relation of mankind, contain three minor groups: (a) the Duties of Neighbors, (b) the Duties of Brothers, and (c), the Duties of Trustees. It is this group of Twelve that we study in this chapter. The Unity of the group is seen in the following outline:

III. MAN'S RELATION TO MAN IN THE KINGDOM.

(a) *The Duties of Neighbors in the Kingdom.*

The Merciless Neighbor, "The Unmerciful Servant."

The True Neighbor, "The Good Samaritan."

The Grasping Neighbor, "The Rich Fool."

The Ungrateful Neighbor, "The Great Supper."

The Heartless Neighbor, "The Friend at Midnight."

(b) *The Duties of Brothers in the Kingdom.*

The Self-righteous Brother vs. The Pitiful, "The Lost Sheep."

The Diligent Sister vs. The Indifferent, "The Lost Coin."

The Repentant Brother vs. The Unforgiving, "Prodigal Son."

(c) *The Duties of Stewards in the Kingdom.*

The Dishonest Trustee vs. The True, "The Unjust Steward."

The Self-indulgent Trustee, "The Rich Man and Lazarus."

The Agnostic and Inhuman Trustee, "The Unjust Judge."

The Self-righteous Trustee, "The Pharisee, and Publican."

The Duties of Neighbors, The Merciless Neighbor.

"The Unmerciful Servant." (Matt. 18:21-35) is a *private lesson* given to St. Peter, and his fellow disciples, in answer to his question, "How oft shall I forgive? Until seven times?" The Apostle thought his suggestion a very generous one. Seven was the number of perfection. A prophet of the Old Kingdom had not dared to say as many. (Amos 1:3) The imagery of the parable is based on ancient Jewish law. The creditor could sell the debtor, his family, and all he possessed to pay his debts. Note the distinction between the parable's imagery and its teaching. (The parable actually condemns the custom on which it is built). The servant owes his king a sum greater than it is possible for him to pay. The king in his kindness gives the servant more than he asks (delay), he cancels the entire debt. The contemptible cruelty of the forgiven debtor in thrusting a fellow servant into prison (he could not sell him) arouses the righteous indignation of his fellow servants who report him to his lord. The king promptly reverses his judgment and puts the wicked servant (where he had unmercifully thrown his fellow servant) into prison until he should pay all his debt. To the school of the Twelve, the Master said, "So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." In the Master's Kingdom the first duty of a *neighbor* is—to love and forgive.

The True Neighbor, "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37) was Christ's reply to a lawyer; to one whose duty

it was to know, and to expound the Law of Moses. His question was asked not to learn but to tempt. Compelled by the Master to answer his first question, he (*to justify himself*) asks another, "Who is my neighbor?" (Did he think there was danger in helping one who was not a neighbor?) The vivid picture of the traveler who fell among brigands, follows. Stripped and half-dead, the poor victim is passed by a priest (an official of the Law), and left to die. Next comes a Levite (an inferior servant of the Law), who also passes by. Last of all comes the Samaritan, a member of a hated mongrel race. He does what the law had not done, and does it generously, not because the victim is a Samaritan, or a Jew, but because he is a *man*, and in sore need. "What think ye," who proved himself a neighbor? The lawyer is compelled to admit that it was the Samaritan, (he does not use the hated name). "Go and do thou likewise!" The Master teaches the lawyer and the disciple that in His Kingdom, every man is every man's neighbor, regardless of race, nationality, or religion. His Kingdom is universal, the true neighbor is a *universal* neighbor.

The Covetous Neighbor, "The Rich Fool," (Luke 12:13-21) is the Master's warning to a self-seeker whose covetousness would stop the progress of God's Kingdom to hasten his own interests. A "certain man" occupies the whole field of the parable. There is no room for friend, neighbor, or needy brother. He is rich, too rich to be happy. He talks over his troubles with the wisest man he knows,—himself. They agree perfectly, for both are equally grasping, unneighborly, and Godless. By building new, and bigger barns for his over-abundant harvests he will solve his problem, and regain his happiness. "Life, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine

ease, eat, drink, and be merry!" It was not his life, but his God that answered him, "Thou fool, this night thy life shall be required of thee." "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." To this He adds, (for the disciples, and for us) an inspired commentary on His own words. (Read Luke 12:22-34.)

The Ungrateful Neighbors, "The Great Supper," (Luke 14:15-24) was spoken at the table of a Ruler and a Pharisee. Many other Pharisees present, perhaps the Master was the only guest who was not a Pharisee. They watched Him with eyes of hate, they listened with ears that itched with wickedness. For, had He not condemned their scramble for the best seats, and foretold their final shame? Had He not dared to rebuke their host for inviting *them*; instead of some lame mendicant or blind beggar? It was the Master's mention of "the resurrection of the just," which prompted a Pharisee (with self-righteous certainty of his own place) to exclaim, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Our Lord's answer is this parable.

It is a parable of prophetic warning against selfish ingratitude. The Old Kingdom has ceased to seek God's righteousness. Its doom is at hand. Yet the Son still extends the gracious invitation of His Father. But the Divine Neighbor's invitation is not accepted. The invited care not for His table, their own is more attractive. The happiness He offers does not appeal to them. In every case they reject His loving invitation in order to be happy,—*in their own selfish and ungrateful way*. He does not compel them to come. He does, by the force of His love, compel the neglected and the outcast, the sinners and the submerged to overcome their fears and enjoy His feast. The Jews who heard the words

of the Master did not heed His warning. Has it no lesson for Christians?

The Heartless Neighbor. "The Friend at Midnight," (Luke 11:5-8) like that of the "Unmerciful Servant," is based, not upon the likeness but upon the *unlikeness* of things earthly, and things heavenly. The parable contradicts by its teaching the conditions on which it is built. Here (even more than there) the Master dares to turn to the evil and use it to teach the good. He makes the heartlessness of a human neighbor the basis for teaching the self-sacrificing love of the Divine Neighbor.

The Master had, at their own request, just given His disciples the Royal Prayer, which in brief comprehends the essential needs of every member of the Kingdom. In the parable the good neighbor persists in his prayer for bread (to meet the great need of a neighbor in distress) and will not be stopped by any excuse. His request is neither unreasonable nor unjust. The heartless man at whose gate he stands claims a neighbor's right and *must* live up to a neighbor's responsibilities. And the heartless neighbor, *is* by his selfish desire to be rid of a true neighbor, compelled to answer his prayer. The Master's question is, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11-12.)

The Master's promises are absolute. But He takes it for granted that we ask for the real loaf, not a stone which resembles it; for the true fish, not for a fishlike serpent; for the actual egg, and not a scorpion. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more*" shall your heavenly Father give all things needful for

His child's body and spirit. And likewise *refuse* to give stones and serpents, even though His foolish children believe them to be loaves and fishes.

Duties of Brothers in the Kingdom :—The Self-righteous Brother vs. the Pitiful. “The Lost Sheep,” (Luke 15: 3-7) is the first of a group of three parables which teach with a powerful and tender persuasiveness, the duties of brothers. Christ's love is being answered by the confidence of the outcast, and the affection of the sinner. He is the true Elder Brother. He meets them more than half way, associates with them, accepts their invitation, and eats with them. The Scribes and Pharisees (separatists and hypocrites) are offended, and blindly fault the Faultless One. This parable is the Master's reply to Pharisaic religionism. “What man of you having an hundred sheep” would fail to leave the ninety and nine, or cease to seek for the lost until it was found? Would you not bring it home on your shoulders rejoicing? Then “how much more” should ye seek, and restore a straying soul, your brother in the family of God. Ye count yourselves righteous in seeking straying sheep, and sneering at straying souls. But “I say unto you * * * joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.”

The Diligent Sister vs. the Indifferent.—“The Lost Coin” (Luke 15: 8-10.) The preceding parable began with, “What man of you,” this one with, “What woman.” Doubtless there were among the Master's listeners Pharisaical women, as well as men. It teaches the same lesson, the value of the lost. The emphasis falls upon the woman's faithful and persistent search for what has been committed to her care; a faithfulness which stops not until the lost,

becomes the found coin. Its value is much less than that of a sheep yet her faithfulness is equal to the shepherd's. Like the shepherd, the good woman rejoices over the finding of her treasure. The Master adds, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15:10.)

The Repentant Brother vs. the Unforgiving.—"The Prodigal Son." (Luke 15:11-32) is a misnamed parable. There are two prodigals, and the one who *did not return* to his father represents those for whose special instruction the parable was spoken. "A certain man had *two* sons," Pharisee and Publican, Jew and Gentile, all alike are the children of one Father, brothers in the same household. All alike have sinned, need to be saved from themselves, and restored to God. No found sheep or coin moves the heart like the restoration of a son. No other parable appeals to us with so much of human interest, and divine suggestion.

The younger son, urged on by a false ideal which made life mean indulgence and animal gratification, demands his legal share of the property. He obtains it, and starts to enjoy a license which he blindly calls freedom. He has his short and mad indulgence. Then he is compelled to face its results. Money gone, false friends gone, freedom gone, respect gone; shame and degradation are left. He offers himself to anybody who will keep him from starving. He becomes a swineherd, and is left to eat swine's food. In bitterness he recalls the father he basely deserted; the dear old home, where even the servants have freedom. He comes to himself, his real self, the old-home self. His heart cries out in penitence, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called *thy son*; make me as one of

thy hired *servants*." (Luke 15:18-19.) His Father's kiss of forgiveness is given before it can be asked. He is restored to sonship. The family on earth (like the family in heaven) rejoices over the salvation of a penitent soul.

But there is an elder brother. He returns from a distant field. He hears the glad music, and is immediately suspicious—of what? He starts to find—not his father, but a servant. From him, he demands an explanation. The servant's reply, "*Thy brother is come,*" "*thy father hath received him safe and sound,*" starts all his latent rage. He will not join in the festivities, he will not enter the house! So the loving father leaves the feast, comes out, and entreats him. His love is answered by upbraidings. The son recounts the years *he* has served, the obedience *he* has given, the absence of feast days, for *him*. Then, in scorn and bitterness, "*but as soon as this thy son (no brother of his) is come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf!*" Did the younger son in all his sin denounce his father, or repudiate his relationship? Was the elder son's labor that of a loving son, or a selfish servant? Did not his attitude, his unloving words, his legal claims, represent the exact attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees, and clearly explain why they were denouncing the Son of Man for seeking and forgiving sinners?

The Duties of Trustees in the Kingdom. The Dishonest Trustee vs. The True. "The Unjust Steward," (Luke 16:1-12) begins a group of four parables which, from widely differing points of view, emphasize the same great truth, *the responsibility of a trustee*. Trustee here means anyone to whom a trust has been committed. The Unjust Steward is always a stumbling-block to readers who fail to distinguish between the imagery of a parable, and the les-

son it teaches. Like the parables of the Unmerciful Servant, and the Friend at Midnight, the teaching here is based on the *contrast* between earthly customs and heavenly truth. The parable was spoken to the disciples. If the wicked steward is wise in his wickedness, "how much more" should the Apostolic Stewards be wise in their righteous trusts. The steward is entrusted with his master's large estate (so were the Jewish Rulers). He is charged with wasting the property. His master demands an accounting. The dishonest steward knows that the charge is true. He is unable to dig. He is ashamed to beg; what then? He has a scheme! He will make every debtor his friend. He has already wasted much. Now (in the brief time left), he will waste more, and for his own advantage. He calls each debtor to account; and then using the authority of his office, he cuts down the bill, one-half, one-third, or one-fifth. And *his* master, a man of the world, commends—what? Not his dishonesty, but his sharpness, his *quick-witted adaptation* of worldly means to worldly ends.

But what says *our* Master? Use your Apostolic Stewardship, not to make friends on earth, but in heaven. Be wise, not for time, but for eternity. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:10-12.)

The Indifferent and Self-indulgent Trustee. "The Rich man and Lazarus." (Luke 16:19-31) is the only one whose imagery is built upon man's condition between death and the judgment. It is not spoken to teach the doctrine of the intermediate state. Yet as the imagery of Christ's parables (whether based upon the natural order of the world, or

on contemporary manners and customs), are all true to historical conditions, we must believe that the imagery of this parable represents the essential conditions of man's state between death and the judgment.

The covetous Scribes and Pharisees had greeted our Lord's portrait of the Unjust Steward with contemptuous sneers. He now puts before them the picture of another steward as indifferent and self-indulgent as themselves. And the Master traces the career of this steward not only on the earth, but into that world from which no man returns.

The rich man lives like a king. His garments are regal in color and cost. His table is one of luxury. Every day is a royal feast day. His home is a palace, its counterpart is to be found only in the palaces of Herod and the High Priests. In vivid contrast is the picture of another man; a beggar, diseased, crippled. Daily he is brought to the rich man's gate to beg from the rich man's guests, or slaves. The beggar's misery is too obtrusive to be unseen. Yet even the unclean dogs of the city are allowed to lick his sores. Had anyone called the rich man's attention to the beggar his answer doubtless would have corresponded to his deeds. 'Am I this beggar's keeper?' That his vast wealth and influence were trusts for which he must account, was a fact utterly foreign to his thought.

The scene changes to the world of disembodied spirits. (The words in which it is painted, are necessarily those of this world.) The rich man and the beggar are both there, but *they have changed places!* It is the beggar who is rich, spiritually rich. It is the rich man who is a beggar; a spiritual beggar praying for one drop of living water from the finger of Lazarus. What is the answer? "Son, remember!" Didst not thou in thy lifetime receive good things?

Were they for thyself alone? Likewise Lazarus received evil things. Didst thou not allow evil to be thrust upon the helpless? Therefore, "he is comforted, and thou are tormented." Nay, Lazarus cannot return to the earth. If thy brothers "hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." These last words were prophetic. When will they be perfectly fulfilled?

The Agnostic and Inhuman Trustee. "The Unjust Judge." (Luke 18:1-8) like the "Friend at Midnight," and the "Unjust Steward," is an example of the Master's daring use of the sinfulness of earth to teach the righteousness of heaven. The Judge, entrusted with the duty of correcting the injustice of others, is himself unjust. Standing before the people as God's trustee, he is in fact, God's adversary. Appointed to be the Trustee of Justice and mercy for the fatherless and the widow, he joins hands with their oppressors. To this inhuman agnostic comes a poor widow seeking justice. Her case is delayed, ignored, and indefinitely postponed; but the widow will not cease her visits nor her cries for justice. At last, worn-out by her importunity, and solely for his own sinful ease, the Judge grants her prayer, and rights her wrongs.

The parable is primarily addressed to the Apostles. Its lesson for them, and for us, is "men ought always to pray and not faint." For, said the Master, "hear what the unjust judge saith!" Then if he, without love for God or man can grant the widow's prayer, "how much more" shall God vindicate "His own elect which cry day and night unto Him!" Nevertheless, the flesh is weak. "When the Son of Man cometh will He find faith on the earth?"

The Self-righteous Trustee. "The Pharisee and the Publican." (Luke 18:9-14) was spoken "unto certain

which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and (what always follows) despised others." "Two men went up into the Temple to pray." It was God's house for both, yet they stood far apart. One, was a Pharisee, an educated man, a teacher in Israel, a model of Jewish righteousness, a Trustee of God's truth and doctrine. The other was a Publican, a confessed sinner, a man who desired to be educated in truth and righteousness. He needed all that the Pharisee stood for, all that he was supposed to teach, and to be. What was the attitude of the learned trustee towards the unlearned and needy pupil?

Listen, "The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The Publican, standing afar off, did not lift even his eyes toward heaven, but humbly smote his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The Publican had judged himself. The Pharisee had praised himself, and judged his neighbor. What was the decision of the final Judge? Of the Publican, Christ said, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other."

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

Before studying the next chapter try to answer the following questions. Wherein do the last parables of Christ differ from the earlier? Carefully read Matt. 20 : 1-6; 21 : 28-31; 25 : 14-30, and Luke 19 : 12-26. What is the prevailing tone of the four parables? What is the general subject of the four parables? What is their relation to each other?

On what day in Holy Week did Christ utter his last parables? What is the general subject of the last parables? Read carefully Matt. 21 : 33-46; 22 : 1-14; 25 : 1-13; 25 : 31-46. What is their tone? How are they related to each other? Wherein do the parables of the Talents, Pounds and Laborers differ?

CHAPTER XI.

LATER PARABLES IN THE PERIOD OF SELF-MANIFESTATION.

THE eight parables of this chapter are nearly all prophetic. They were spoken during the closing days of Our Lord's teaching. Six of the eight were uttered on the last day of His public ministry. His teaching and pleading is almost ended. He looks back upon a series of rejections by those He came to save, He looks forward and sees the destruction of the Holy City, and the Jewish Nation. He weeps for the sorrows of those He loves, even in their sins. In these last hours He speaks with a solemn earnestness, with a sternness of condemnation not found in earlier parables. He pleads for a recognition of God's justice, He proclaims the certainty of God's judgment. The unity of His thought is seen in the following outline:—

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD, AND THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

(a) *The Rewards of the Kingdom:—*

For making the most of Opportunities,—“The Vineyard Laborers.”
For Unequal Faithfulness to Equal Trusts,—“The Pounds.”
For Equal Faithfulness to Unequal Trusts,—“The Talents.”
For Actual, not Verbal Obedience,—“The Two Sons.”

(b) *The Final Judgments of the King:—*

On the Betrayers of Divine Trusts,—“The Wicked Husbandmen.”
On Despisers of Divine Invitations,—“The Marriage Feast.”
On Ignoring Our Duty Towards God,—“The Virgins.”
On Ignoring Our Duty towards Man,—“The Sheep and Goats.”

Rewards of the Kingdom. Making the Most of Opportunities. "The Laborers in the Vineyard." (Matt. 20: 1-6) was spoken to the Apostles. St. Peter reminding his Lord that the Twelve had left all to follow Him asks, "What shall be our reward?" The Master names a reward even larger than their expectations. Yet He adds, "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." He repeats the same warning at the close of the parable. Plainly this is the key to its interpretation. The real question is, "What determines who shall be last, and who first?" All four parables on the Rewards of the Kingdom make (in principle) the same answer. If we do not find the basic truth which Christ is teaching *within* His parables—we shall not find it anywhere.

The pivot on which the parable turns is the different hours at which the laborers began to labor. This point is emphasized by the story; by the householder's question to the later laborers; by their answer to him; by the protest of the all-day laborers; and by the householder's answer to them. Why did the first laborers go to work in the morning? Because they had the opportunity. Why did not the third-hour men begin at the first hour? They did not have the opportunity. When did the sixth-hour, the ninth-hour, and the eleventh-hour men all begin their work? At the *first hour of their opportunity*. Does Christ here (or anywhere) teach that a man is responsible for not doing what he never had the opportunity of doing? Is there any statement that there was a difference in the *quality* of the laborer's work?

In the commercial world, the laborer is paid for the time he labors. It is perfectly right he should be. The householder recognizes this when he agrees to pay a penny for a day's work. The laborers rightly held him to his agreement,

and he (with equal right) held them to theirs. But even in the commercial world an employer will sometimes add to a faithful laborer's wages, a gift. Not because he has earned it, but because he needs it; because his employer recognizes that the man "has done what he could" towards earning it. Could the angels do more?

The parable teaches that what an exceptional employer does occasionally, God does perpetually. The man who has had only one hour of opportunity, but has faithfully made the most of it, shall in no wise lose his reward. The Scribes and Pharisees claimed that everything in sight belonged to them. Were they not "first called"? Had not Jehovah made a "legal agreement" with them? Why should eleventh-hour Gentiles receive the same salvation as themselves?

The Apostles were officers in the New Kingdom. There was danger that *they* might think of God's obligations even as did their Jewish teachers. The vision of Christ was larger than the Apostles. It took in all the centuries before the judgment. It included the soul of the last black boy yet to be baptized in darkest Africa. So His parable says—The Father takes everything into account. Reckon not the hours of service, but make the most of your opportunity. For "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

Unequal Faithfulness to Equal Trusts, "The Parable of the Pounds," (Luke 19:12) was spoken as Christ was nearing Jerusalem. The Disciples expected that "The Kingdom of God was immediately to appear," The Master went forward knowing He was about to die. For Jerusalem was the City (in the parable) whose "citizens hated Him," and it was to Him they had said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The Master knew the centuries that must elapse before He returned from the "far country"; He knew

the wickedness of His enemies; the fidelity of His true followers.

In this parable all the workers have equal time and opportunity; the same capital, and the same commercial advantages. The situation is clearly an ideal one; the very one which some good people believe would cure all economic evils to-day. Everyone has an equal amount of property, an equal social position. Nobody is last, and everyone is first. The conditions are angelic, but the workers are human. It is human nature, not heavenly freedom which decides results.

The Nobleman returns and asks for an accounting, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds!" "Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." "Lord, here is thy pound, I have kept it laid up in a napkin." Everyone had received the same outward and earthly trust. Why are the returns so different? Because their faithfulness to inward trusts (of mind, and heart, and will) was so different? The ten pounds, the five pounds, and the one pound, in each case, measured the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of *the man*; and therefore the amount of his reward. The parable implies that only one man, a faithless shirk, failed to receive some reward for his labor. And this poor worthless fellow adds insult to laziness, by blaming his Lord for his own miserable failure. Note the rewards of the Master, not ease, nor luxury, nor rest, but in every case, *opportunity for larger work*. And the shirk's reward? The loss of the one pound he had refused to use. Who received it? The man who had proved himself the most capable of using it. Remember, also, that every term in the parable stands for a spiritual fact, and an eternal truth.

Equal Faithfulness to Unequal Trusts. "The Parable of the Talents," (Matt. 25:14) was spoken after that of the

Virgins. It is considered here because it is closely related to the "Vineyard Laborers," and the "Pounds." The rewards of the laborers are based upon like faithfulness to unlike opportunities. The rewards of the servants with the pounds is based upon unlike faithfulness to the same trust. In this parable we have another phase of the same great fact of man's personal responsibility to God. Here the fact is faced that all men are different; that they are unlike, not only in their opportunities (in the vineyard), and their faithfulness (to their pounds); they are unlike also in their trusts. They differ in their trusts of mental, moral and physical endowments; and also in those outward trusts which we call the opportunities of life. What then? If no two persons, or their conditions are exactly the same, what is Christ's standard for measuring the responsibilities of mankind? What is the final basis of reward or penalty in the Kingdom?

A careful study of the parable reveals these facts. (a) The lord of the house called "his own" servants, or slaves. They belonged to him, therefore they were all accountable to him. (b) "He delivered unto them *his* goods." Nothing was their own. They were temporary trustees. They must render an account. (c) To one their lord gave (in round numbers) a thousand dollars, to another five hundred, to a third two hundred. No two men's trust was the same. Therefore no two men were accountable for the same amount.

(d) Moreover, we are informed why no two men received exactly the same amount. The Lord knew his servants, their abilities, their limitations. So He gave "to every man according to his several ability." With loving consideration He gives to no man more than he is able to bear. (e) As the

size of each man's gift determines his responsibility, he who received the least, had the least for which to account.

"After a long time" (f) during which each servant is master of his own trust, the lord returns. Then (g) every servant is called to account for his own trust. In (h) every case, save one, the accounting is a joyful one; and each servant receives the *same* commendation, and the *same* reward. But all had different trusts! (i) The Lord's words in no case referred to the amount of a man's trust, only to his *personal faithfulness*. "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt. 25:23.) The fact that each man had increased his lord's money in equal proportion, proved that each man had been equally faithful to his stewardship.

Here, as in the parable of the Vineyard, a man's opportunities are taken into account, for they (like his "goods") either increased, or decreased his responsibilities. Here, as in the parable of the Pounds, it is not the amount of the man's goods (*there* they were all alike) but the amount of each man's faithfulness which determines his reward. Here, as in the Pounds, there is one wicked servant who ignores his stewardship and repudiates his accountability. In both cases the judgment simply confirms the natural result of God's physical and spiritual laws. The man who refuses to use his opportunities or gifts, loses them; they go to him who will use them faithfully. Moreover, in all three parables the truth is plainly taught that he who is *faithful*, even in the least, "shall in no wise lose his reward."

Actual not Verbal Obedience. "The Parable of the Two Sons," (Matt. 21:28-31) was spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees. They came to the Master demanding, "By what

authority doest thou these things?" He answers by the counter-question, Whence was the authority of John the Baptist, from God or man? They dared not answer. For if the Forerunner had God's authority, how much more had the Messiah Himself! But as they had rejected John's authority (but dared not confess it) so they were rejecting the authority of the Christ.

In the parable the son who so glibly answers "I go, sir," represents the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees. The one who bluntly says, "I will not," yet later repents and obeys; stands for the open sinner, who honestly confessed their sins and accepted John's baptism. Too blind to see themselves in the mirror of the parable, the Jewish Rulers, in answer to Christ's question,—Which one obeyed? promptly answer, "He that did the will of his father." The Master replies, "The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you." Has the parable no lesson for the Church to-day?

The Four Final Parables were spoken on Tuesday of Holy Week. They differ from the preceding four mainly in their emphasis. The whole eight are a prophetic presentation of the rewards and penalties of the Kingdom. In the first four, the emphasis falls upon the rewards. In the last four, it falls upon the judgment of the wicked. They contain the last words of God's appointed Judge before He was murdered by the officers of God's first Church.

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-46. Also, Mark 12. Luke 20) was spoken to the Rulers of the Nation. It is a vivid picture of Israel's great privileges, great sins, and approaching doom. It is condensed history, prophecy, and condemnation. The householder (Jehovah) plants a vineyard, fences it in, builds a wine-press, a water tower, and entrusts it to husbandmen during his lengthy ab-

sence. At harvest-time he sends servant after servant to receive his fruit. One is beaten, another stoned, another killed. Last of all he sends one they should reverence, his only son. Then they say, "This is the heir! come let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours." They kill the son.

The Master, looking into the face of His eager listeners, said, "What will the lord of the vineyard do to those husbandmen?" Quickly came the sympathetic reply, "He will destroy those miserable men, and give the vineyard to others." But some (who saw the parable's fearful meaning) said, "God forbid!" Then He who was about to be murdered looked into the angry faces of His murderers and pronounced His judgment. "Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." And the Scribes and Chief Priests sought to lay hands on Him in that very hour. Is further interpretation necessary? Is it too wicked a condition to have a modern application? Is the Church of the Gentiles true to her tremendous responsibilities?

Despisers of Divine Invitations. "The Parable of the Marriage Feast," (Matt. 22:1-14) at first follows the general lines of "The great Supper," (Luke 14:15) but it differs in its insertion of a minor parable into the main story, and, what is more important, is spoken for a *different purpose*. It is a prophetic portrayal of God's *final judgment* upon those who despise His invitations, or the divinely fixed conditions of their acceptance.

The repeated rejection of the King's invitations (in the parable) and the contemptuous and cruel treatment of his servants, picture the same attitude that is displayed by the Rulers in the preceding parable. The merciful plans of God clash with the profane plans of man, therefore God is thrust

aside! But the King's invitation is to honor his son. Refusal means *a rejection of the son*. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He came unto His own at Nazareth, and they received Him not. He came unto His own at Capernaum, and they also received Him not. Now He is speaking to His own at Jerusalem. They have already willed to reject Him, and only wait for a favorable hour to kill Him. Do you wonder that in the parable the King destroys those who would murder his son?

But the King's eternal purpose to bless His subjects cannot be defeated by man. As the first invitees proved themselves unworthy, the King now invites others. All (both bad and good), who do not scorn the invitation are accepted by the King, and the wedding is furnished with guests. This is Christ's prophetic picture of the Gentiles flocking into the Kingdom of God. But man is never perfect. The Gentile, like the Jew, is prone to spoil the right act by doing it in the wrong way.

The King, pleased to meet his guests, enters the great reception room. All are clothed in the garments of fine white linen provided by their royal host. No, not all. With surprise the King sees one in the dust-stained apparel of the highway. To accept a royal invitation and refuse to accept its conditions is a wilful insult, both to the King and to the royal Bridegroom. Yet with all kindness, the King speaks, "Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" The offender is speechless. He has done (*after* accepting the royal invitation) what those did who refused it. He has thrust aside God's will to make room for his own. Therefore, he is sent to join those he had imitated. Has any man truly accepted the King's invitation to repent-

ance, obedience, and happiness who refuses to put on the Kingdom's garment of holiness?

Ignoring our Duty towards God. "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," (Matt. 25:1-13) was spoken on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. The last day of Christ's public ministry is at its close. The Apostles are asking about the end of the world, and the time of His return. The warning answer is, "Watch, ye know not what hour your Lord cometh." The same warning is repeated at the close of the parable. They are its key. The parable begins in simple, rustic beauty; it ends in pathos deep and tragic. It is a prophetic picture of those who ignore their duty towards God.

It opens with the bright and happy expectancy of a group of ten bridesmaids waiting in the twilight for the coming of a bridegroom (the Divine Bridegroom). Outwardly they are perfectly ready for his coming. All are dressed in the brilliantly colored wedding garments of the East; all wear their festival jewels, all have their lamps filled and burning. Joyful expectancy is seen on every face, is heard in merry songs, and rippling laughter. Seemingly nothing is lacking. And yet, "five are wise and five are foolish." There is unexpected delay. The darkness deepens, the bridegroom does not come. The virgins nod, and later all sleep.

At midnight there is an awakening cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh!" The cry receives an echoing cry of gladness from the wise virgins, but from the others a cry of dismay. Our lamps are going out! "Give us of your oil." The bridegroom had come when they "thought not." They were not watching or praying—were not ready for emergency. Their preparedness was superficial. Everyone had her lamp, but, alas, it was empty!

But "while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and

they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us! But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." (Matt. 25: 10-12.) It was those who were "ready" when the door opened, "ready" before they slept, "ready" before they left home, that went to the wedding. The shut door could not be opened to the rabble crowd of the street. The real friends of the bridegroom were with him in the house.

Ignoring our Duty towards Man. "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats," (Matt. 25: 31-46) is not, so much a parable as a prophetic picture of the final judgment. It is spoken partly in didactic, partly in parabolic language. It pictures the hour, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory," and sit upon His throne of judgment. The parable of the virgins taught the basic truth of the Kingdom, man's duty towards God. This enforces a truth which "is like unto it," Man's duty to his Neighbor. The judgments of Heaven cause universal astonishment. Earthly standards are all ignored. Judgments based on worldly honors, social place, or material conditions, are reversed. Many are astonished to find themselves in the company of the righteous; more are amazed to find themselves classed with the wicked.

Countless thousands who had forgotten their good deeds hear the divine Judge declaring that when He was hungry they had given Him food; when He was thirsty, they had given Him drink; when He was a stranger, they had taken Him to their homes, and when He was sick, they had nursed Him. In their astonishment, they cry—Lord, we are not entitled to Thy commendation. We never ministered to Thee. But the Judge answers, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as

ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Yet still more amazed are the thousands who hear the divine Judge say, "Depart from me! For I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; a stranger and ye took me not in; sick and ye visited me not." "But Lord, Lord! It is all a mistake! We never neglected *Thee*! If we had ever seen Thee hungry, or thirsty, or sick, we would out of our abundance, have ministered unto Thee." What does the Judge answer? "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not unto Me."

The last parable of the Master is even as His first. The teaching of this parable is in all essentials, that of the "Sower." The good opportunity, like the good seed falls into all lives. What it shall bring forth is decided by the condition of the heart-soil into which it falls. If there is no place for the growth of the divine seed on earth, how can there be fruitage in God's Kingdom?

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

What was the character of the last day of Our Lord's *public* ministry? How did Christ prepare His disciples for the cross? Luke 22 : 15; Matt. 26 : 26-29. How did Our Lord comfort His disciples in view of His death? Mark 14 : 27-29; John 14 : 2-3. What was the supreme claim of Christ? Mark 14 : 62. Read carefully, devoutly, and picture to yourself the story of the cross in Matt. and John. Carefully compare the different appearances of Christ after His resurrection. How are they related to His teaching?

CHAPTER XII.

THE PERIOD OF THE PASSION.

WE have reached the final stage of the Master's teaching. He has finished the message His Father gave Him to deliver. His public ministry is ended. Henceforth His Kingdom will be presented to the world not by Himself, but by those He has chosen out of the world.

The last day of the public ministry of the Son of Man is one of bitter attack from the combined forces of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodian politicians. The day which follows it is the only one in Holy Week that has no record. It needs none. When we look back upon the crises of His ministry, we see that for each He prepared Himself by personal prayer and communion with His Father.

The Spiritual Preparation of the Apostles for the Cross followed that of the Master's; but His intense words and more intense object lessons found the minds of the Twelve, preoccupied by earthly hopes and ambitions. They were thinking of the old Passover and its uppermost seats. He was planning for a New Passover in which the humblest were the highest. They dreamed of authority in the New Kingdom. He was preparing to lay down His earthly life. In the Upper Room, the longing of His heart finds utterance. "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). But some of His hearers were arguing over who was the greater!

"Whether is greater he that sitteth at meat or he that

serveth?" Then their Lord rises, takes a towel and begins to wash the Apostles' feet. When St. Peter, partially realizing the keen rebuke of this act, and the awfulness of His Master's humiliation, cries out against it, his Lord's answer is, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." (John 13:7.) Do we know? Or can we realize the awful meaning of His other words, "The Son of Man indeed goeth as is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born." (Mark 14:21.)

After the departure of Judas, the Son of Man "took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom," (Matt. 26:26-29.)

And this Holy Sacrament was, to the mind of Christ, the best possible method of preparing His Apostles for the coming sorrows of the cross; was the best way possible for the Son of God (who loved His own even unto the end) to express to them the measureless fullness of His love. So it comes to us as His preparation for our deepest sorrow, and our highest joy. It is "the way" of His love, "the door" into his life, our feast upon "The True Bread which came down from Heaven." In His love it is ours forever, until the human mystery becomes the divine reality in His heavenly Kingdom.

To Strengthen His Apostles against Unbelief is the next effort of the Master's love. His method is to foretell what

is to come to Himself, and what will be its effect upon them, in order that when His words are fulfilled, they may remember that their Master had foreseen and foretold them all. Over-confidence in self proves the way for despair of self. How plainly the Master saw this is revealed by His words. "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." But Peter said unto Him, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." (Mark 14:27-29.) And yet the most vehement boaster became the most flagrant denier.

Note how tenderly the Master loves His own. "Father, the hour has come." "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; * * * "And now I am no more in the world, * * * Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. * * * Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." (John 17:1-20.)

Even in the hour of His agony he could not forget their need. "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (Mark 14:37, 38.) And how tenderly the Master guarded them in the hour of betrayal. It was He who was about to die that stepped forth between the armed band and His terrified Apostles. It was He who said, "Whom seek ye?" "I am Jesus of Nazareth." "If ye seek Me, let these go their way." Then all the Apostles left Him and fled.

To Comfort the Apostles Against His Death is another of the Master's last loving efforts. "Let not your heart be troubled. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will

come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14: 2, 3.) They must wait, yet they shall not be alone. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of Truth." (John 14: 16.)

"He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you: My peace I bring unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14: 26, 27.) "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you; continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love. * * * This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15: 9-13.)

His Claims before the Cross are simply the *culmination* of the claims of His life. He had renounced His glory, renounced His right to claim human kindness, or common mercy; He had even renounced His life. But three things He could not renounce—His right to common justice, His right to assert the truth of His Messiahship, His right to assert the truth of His Divine Sonship.

He stands and is questioned by the High Priest as to His teaching. He answers "I have spoken openly to the world: * * * and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou Me: ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them." (John 18: 20-21.) For this honest and outspoken truth He is struck with a rod. To the coward who struck a bound and helpless prisoner, He answers, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why

smitest thou Me?" (John 18:23.) He neither resents the blow nor refuses to suffer; yet He claims His right to that common justice which is due even to the lowest of mankind.

Regal and silent before false witnesses, the High Priest puts Him on oath. "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." (Matt. 26:63.) Jesus calmly answers, "I am." And for this testimony He is condemned to death, spit upon, mocked, reviled, smitten, and delivered to Pontius Pilate, the governor. (Mark. 14:62.)

Calm amid most false and fierce Jewish denunciations, Pilate marvels, and then questions his prisoner, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence. Again Pilate asks, "Art thou a king then? Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John 18:36, 37.)

The soldiers of Herod have mocked the Son of Man. Pilate has presented Him to the frenzied Jewish mob; and now the betrayed, falsely accused, and falsely condemned Sufferer hangs upon the cross. But above His bowed head, in Hebrew, and Latin, and Greek, is written His name and His office: "THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." And these words of man's intended mockery, proclaim God's eternal truth. The crucified is the King of the Jews, the King of the Gentiles, the only Universal King the world has ever known.

The Teaching of the Cross, is the culmination of the teaching of His perfect life. The cross condenses into one supreme act the human shame, the heavenly love, and the divine glory

of His entire ministry. It stands to-day, as it has stood through all the centuries, His heart's interpretation of His own sublime paradox, "He that loseth his life shall find it."

The *shame* of the cross came from man. His enemies were eye-witnesses of His power. They had seen Him give life to the dead. They knew that one able to give life was able to destroy life. They knew also that He who possessed this mighty power has used it only to restore. His character made it impossible for Him to be a destroyer. It is the supreme shame of the Jewish priesthood that it heaped its insults and mockeries upon one who was too loving to treat them as they deserved.

His enemies planned to destroy His life and bury His teaching in everlasting contempt. They did their worst, and their worst exalted Him. Against the background of their shame, shines more brightly the glory of perfect Love. Their words of mockery were (by His perfect life), transformed to words of honor and praise. The Chief Priests mockingly said, "He saved others, Himself he cannot save." Their words are true. He fed others, Himself He could not feed. He healed others, His own wounds He could not heal. He rescued others from suffering, but not Himself. He saved others from death, Himself He could not save. Why? Because His life and strength were consecrated to His Father's glory and His brother's good. His great love could not be spent upon Himself.

The *Love* of the cross is the love of God. He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father. He that hath seen the love of the Crucified hath seen the heart of the Father. The lodestone of the cross is not its suffering, but that which underlies the suffering,—prompted it, and sanctifies it,—the love of Him who gladly gave His life for others.

“Father, forgive them.” He cannot change the hearts of His murderers, but He can forgive them, pray for them, and love them. “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” This is Love’s answer to the heart of the malefactor, whose eye of faith (even amid earthly defeat and death) was able to see the King in His Kingdom. “Woman, behold thy Son.” Life’s supreme tie is not the kinship of blood, but kinship of love in Christ. Yet when blood and faith and love are one, how tenderly He teaches that the kinship of earth becomes the kinship of Heaven. “It is finished.” The Father’s will is fulfilled. The Son’s work is done, the sacrifice of love is complete. “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”

The Resurrection Itself is the most profound object lesson in all history. Christ’s return to life was only a part of His resurrection. The resurrection body possessed powers which enabled Him to reveal Himself to His own, and not to the world. He no longer belongs to the earth. His body is not bound by the limitations of time or place, nearness or distance. The sealed stone cannot confine Him to the grave, nor the locked door bar Him from His assembled disciples. His body is superior to physical ill or injury. It is a body seen, heard and touched by those to whom He ministers; yet (if He so will), one that eludes mortal touch and vanishes into thinnest air. It is a body that has triumphed over death, over every limitation of earth and flesh. It is no longer the body of His humiliation, but of His resurrection.

The Apostles were men of flesh and blood. They knew the human nature of their Master far better than His divine nature. The divine powers of His resurrection body frightened them. He seemed an unreal being. It was the identity of His character; the identity of His love, the identity

of His friendship, tenderness, and teaching, which stilled their fears and restored their sadly shattered faith.

As a dear teacher of our own in the midst of his instructions is called from our presence, yet soon returns and continues his instruction, so the divine Master stops His teaching and goes out to endure His cross. Yet on His return from the grave He takes up the spiritual lesson at the very point where He was interrupted by death, and continues His instruction. His beloved pupils hear again the same devout truths, the same loving appeals to humility and obedience, the same affectionate reproofs, and the same tender entreaties which they had learned to love during the days of His humiliation; and they are to the Apostles the strongest possible assurance of the personal identity of their beloved Master.

His Words After Death are built upon His words before death. They are full of the same divine wisdom, the same personal tenderness. "Mary?" It was a single word; yet it was more than enough. Its familiar intonation, its tone of entreaty for recognition, its message of love, assures the weeping Mary that the Speaker is in very truth her risen Saviour.

"O foolish ones, and slow-hearted to believe!" Behoved it not the Christ to suffer? And they who walked the path to Emmaus beside the Speaker, eagerly listened to His wonderful interpretation of old and familiar prophecies until their hearts, catching His divine fire, burned within them, as they had burned in happier days. Yet unbelief blinded their eyes. They knew Him not until (the evening meal about to begin) they see, with startled vision, their wonderful Teacher lifting His eyes to heaven and breaking their bread. They know Him! But (His lesson taught) He al-

ready has vanished; and the blessed bread lies broken before His empty place.

“Peace be unto you.” But His words bring fear, not peace, to the spirit-broken disciples, secretly assembled behind locked doors. Not until they hear His lips speaking in old and familiar tones, not until He (adapting Himself to their shattered faith) offered to their eyes His wounded hands and feet, does fear give place to gladness. Yet for very joy they believed not until He had eaten before them. Could Apostolic doubt go further than this? Yes, in the mind of Thomas. Yet from this greatest doubter came the greatest confession. “My Lord, and my God!” But the Saviour pronounces a greater benediction, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

“Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me?” Feed My lambs.” “Feed My sheep.” “Feed My sheep.” It was to the threefold denier that the risen Lord gave this threefold charge. And note, that He who had overruled Apostolic protest, and taken little children up in His arms and blessed them,—He it is who gives the *first place* to the shepherding of the lambs of His Kingdom. Does this mean nothing?

The Great Forty Days. “Being seen of the Apostles forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. (Acts 1:2, 3.) So Saint Luke sums up the whole teaching of this wonderful period. The main reason for the brevity of the record is undoubtedly due to one fact. Christ’s post-resurrection ministry was *for His Disciples only*. He had no additional truth to give to the world; that must come from the Holy Spirit.

The *record* of Christ’s teaching, “pertaining to the Kingdom of God,” is as follows: “Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had

said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:23.) "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 28:18, 19.)

"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-49.) Compare Matthew 18:18.

The quotation of these words of our Lord reminds us that man's conflicting interpretations of them have done much to perpetuate the unchristian divisions of Christendom. How then can any interpretation that I may offer help to quiet the strife of tongues? I shall not attempt to interpret them. I shall only call the attention of every sincere student to the Master's principles of interpretation without the guidance of which no interpretation can be free from error.

The meaning of these words is determined by *the historical conditions* under which they were uttered. It matters not what their "face value" may be to you, or to me; the real question is, What did they mean to the men to whom Christ spoke. To them they conveyed a definite message. The meaning of His words may trouble us, they aroused no questionings among the Apostles. Doubtless His words have a larger meaning to-day than when they were uttered, but it cannot be one which *contradicts* their first meaning.

We must remember that the Apostles were not educated in the Christian Church. It did not exist until Pentecost. The men to whom Christ spoke had been from childhood members of the Jewish Church of God. Did that Church have authority to forgive and retain sins, to bind and to loose? If so, then the Lord's words conveyed to the Apostles not a new truth, but a new spiritual authority.

So also the Lord's command to baptize conveyed to them not a new religious truth, but a new spiritual authority. They had already been baptized with water, and had, by Christ's direction, baptized others with water. Moreover, their first Master (John Baptist) had taught them that water-baptism only prepared the way for the higher baptism of the Holy Ghost.

As the Apostles, without questioning, had interpreted their Master's commands concerning both the New Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the new Passover of the Kingdom *by their experience* as members of the ancient Church of God, so also (as the Lord said nothing about it, and they had no other experience), they necessarily took it for granted that the New Baptism, in its relation to water, would follow the old form and mode with which they were familiar. And, for the same reasons, they also took it for granted that membership in the New Covenānt and the New Passover of the Kingdom would be open to all such persons as were admitted to God's Old Covenant and Passover.

Therefore, if we are in doubt as to the meaning of the final commands of our Lord, our only path to certainty is perfect loyalty to the Master's principle of historic interpretation. We cannot grasp the true meaning of Christ's words unless we understand the Old Covenant sufficiently to know what were the ruling ideas and ideals which shaped the thoughts of His Hebrew hearers,—no others were present.

“Things Pertaining to The Kingdom of God,” what are they? We know that for forty days the Saviour remained on the earth to teach them, but (except for a few momentous days) where is the *record* of His words? The basic principle of all our studies is that the words and the deeds of Christ are inseparable. Under different forms they are the expression of one divine Life. His words prepare for His deeds. In His deeds we find the interpretation of His words. So also the words of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit are one. In the *work* of the Holy Spirit, we see recorded the *teaching* of the Divine Son.

The subject of our Lord's last instruction before His death was the Holy Spirit, His office and work. The Holy Spirit is to take the Master's place in the lives of the Twelve. He will bear witness to Christ, and glorify Christ. He will dwell in them and instruct them. He will bring all things to their remembrance. He will guide them into all truth. These promises were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, and in the years that followed it. The *record* is found in the book we call “The Acts of the Apostles,” but which is (on its divine side) the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

What Christ taught in the forty days the Holy Spirit put into deeds. In the life of the Apostolic Church, in its oneness of aim, its unity and harmony of action, we have a vivid picture of the essentials of what Christ taught during the great forty days. *Could any verbal statement of Christ's teaching equal the living record of the Holy Spirit?*

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

What is our fundamental principle of interpretation? See Chap. II. Christ's *words* reveal His Person and power: What do His deeds reveal? Is there any essential difference between superhuman teaching and superhuman doing? Did Christ make any claim for His divine words that He did

not make for His deeds? John 5: 36; 10: 37. Did Christ ever separate his miracles from His instructions? Did He use miracles as a means of teaching? Matt. 16 : 8-10. Carefully study Mark 2 : 1-12 as a lesson in object teaching. Did Christ utter parables privately to His disciples? Were the following miracles done publicly or privately? Luke 5 : 1-11; Mark 4 : 35-41; Luke 9 : 28-36.

CHAPTER XIII.

MIRACLES AS AN EDUCATIONAL METHOD.

WE know that our Lord's life, and our Lord's words are the natural expression of one perfect personality. We have learned to interpret His words by His life. We are satisfied that following this principle has helped us to discover the truth. We have reached that point in our study where the idea of separating His words from His life, and interpreting them as though they were not the natural expression of that life, is simply unthinkable.

But can we limit this basic principle of interpretation to our Lord's words? If His words are the perfectly natural expression of His personality, *are not His deeds the same?* If we separate our Lord's works from His personality, and interpret them as though they were not the natural, and inevitable expression of that personality, are we not as unreasonable as though we treated His words in the same way? Yet there are some who accept the superhuman words of Christ, and then stumble at His superhuman deeds. But both are a part of Himself. Both manifest, by different methods, the same spiritual power, the same divine personality. It would be just as reasonable to separate Christ's parables concerning the future life from all other parables, and reject them because they are the expression of a divine knowledge, as it is to reject certain works of Christ because they are the expression of a divine power.

The Perfect Unity of the Master's Words and Works.

The parables and miracles are the expression of that one will of God which the Son came to fulfil. This is the Son's own claim. "The *words* I speak unto you are not mine, but His that sent me," and again, "The *works* which the Father hath given me to finish, bear witness of me." "If I do not the work of my Father, believe me not." (John 5:36; 10:37.) His miraculous works, as truly as His verbal instructions, are a part of His educational activity. He uses them for the instruction of those He healed and still more frequently for the private training of the Twelve. For example, when Christ faced 5,000 hungry men in the desert, He said to Philip and Andrew, "Whence shall we buy bread?" "He Himself knew what He would do." Why then did He question? To turn their attention from the miracle to its *teaching*. Later when the disciples find themselves in a desert place without bread, they, anxious about their food, fail to understand the Master's teaching. What is His rebuke? "O ye of little faith! Do ye not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, * * * neither the seven loaves of the four thousand?" (Matt. 16:8-10.) Clearly in the mind of the Master the two miracles were *intended* to be educational, an important part of their training.

At the very "beginning of miracles" our attention is called to the instructive purpose of Christ's "works." It is the educational side of the miracle that St. John emphasizes. Christ manifested His glory, and "His disciples believed on Him." What is true of the teaching power of this miracle is true of all; their spiritual discipline is never absent, in many was never absent, in many cases this was their principal purpose.

Our Sixth Principle of Interpretation is, "All inspired statements must be interpreted historically: the meaning of doubtful words is determined by the conditions under which they were uttered." This principle applies to Christ's *works* as certainly as it does to His teaching. To ignore the circumstances under which Christ did a divine work, or the conditions which brought it forth, is to misinterpret it. To make no distinction between a miracle done in private for the training of a single disciple, and another done in public for the benefit of thousands, is certainly an invitation to false conclusions. It will help us to understand Christ's educational use of miracles if we consider them as, (a) Public miracles, (b) Public miracles with individual instruction, and (c) Private miracles for private instruction.

The Public Miracles of Christ outnumber all others.

They are a revelation of Jesus as the expected Messiah. The common people recognized their Messianic significance. Believers asked, Is not this the Christ? "When Christ cometh will He do more miracles than these?" Christ again, and again called attention to the *teaching* of His Messianic works. On two notable occasions He taught the inseparable connection between the works of the Messiah and the Person of the Messiah; namely, in the Synagogue at Nazareth and in His answer to the doubt of the imprisoned Baptist.

To every true Israelite, the Messiah was to be the Restorer. He would restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the diseased, and life to the dead. Jesus did these works before the eyes of John's disciples. They reported to their Master what they had themselves seen and heard. To him their words were a vivid portrait of the Messiah from the scroll of Isaiah. It dispelled every doubt. In the Synagogue at Nazareth Jesus' application of this

same page of Isaiah to His own words and works aroused unbelief, hatred, and attempted murder. Alike to the devout Jew and the disbelieving Jew, the words, the works, the mission, and the Person of Jesus were inseparable.

The miracles of Christ taught the same truths of the Kingdom which He emphasized by word of mouth; and taught them with a dramatic power, and a vividness of action which no verbal statement could equal. To the learned and righteous Nicodemus, to the unlearned and sinful Samaritan, and to His own hot-headed neighbors at Nazareth, Christ taught the surprising truth that the blessing of the Messiah were not for one nation, but for all people. Did He not teach the same truth and even more effectively, when He miraculously healed and blessed that Samaritan leper, restored to sanity the daughter of the woman of Sidon, and fed four thousand of her heathen neighbors? Our Lord never spoke more Godlike words than these, "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." (Luke 6:27, 28.) Yet was not this same lesson still more indelibly written upon the hearts of His disciples when, in Gethsemane, surrounded by those who were about to slay Him, they saw their Master restore the slashed ear of an assistant murderer?

Public Miracles with Individual Instruction were almost a daily occurrence in Christ's ministry of mercy. Never is there to be found a miracle that did not teach the lesson of human faith, and divine love. The Son was ever ready to do for man what man could not do for himself. But the blessing Christ waited to give was conditioned by man's desire, man's faith, man's obedience. That all men must be co-workers with God, in sickness and in health, was the truth

taught by every miracle of the Master, taught under circumstances which to the pupil made the lesson unforgettable.

In the training-school of miracle, as in the preparatory-school of parable, there was no demand for human perfection. Man's act of faith, of will, of obedience registered varying degrees of imperfection. The diseased and shrinking woman said,—I will hide myself in the crowd which throngs Him. I will secretly touch the hem of His garment; its virtue and holiness will heal mine infirmity. But although Christ willed that His life should meet her touch and heal her body, He would not allow her soul to be weakened by the superstitious idea that she had been restored by a garment and not by His own merciful will. Therefore, she is detained, instructed and joyfully departs with a purer faith. Did the disciples learn their lesson as perfectly as the patient sufferer? (Compare Mark 5:24-34 with Matt. 15:21-28.)

The miracle of the healing the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12) is a fourfold object lesson, an instruction in social, individual, doctrinal, and Messianic truth. The neighborly act of the four men who brought the invalid; their persistent faith which overcame every difficulty, was divinely noted and made the foundation of Christ's action. They, however, could do only their social duty, bring their friend to the Master's feet. They could not heal, nor give their friend that faith which he must have before he could be healed. But the greater miracle-lesson preceded the lesser. Christ's mercy surpassed all expectation. He healed the paralytic's soul. He gave him what he needed most of all, yet dared not ask. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Christ's words are an astonishment to the Galileans; a challenge to the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" It is a doctrinal ques-

tion; a question of divine truth or human blasphemy. And as *we* often use a material object to teach a moral truth, so Christ uses the physical miracle to prove the spiritual miracle—His power and authority to forgive sins. A man who knows in his heart that his sins are forgiven, is made the glad possessor of a saving faith. Son, “Arise, take up thy bed and go thy house.” And the instant obedience of him who was helpless completed, confirmed and clinched, the teaching of this living parable. (Mark 2: 1–12.)

Private Miracles are an educational method used only in one sphere of Christ’s activity, His personal training of the Twelve. We noted in Christ’s verbal instruction that while most of His parables were addressed to the multitude, yet a goodly number were plainly uttered for special hearers. (Matt. 21: 28, 21: 33, 22: 1.) Again others were addressed to His disciples only, or were followed by private interpretation, personal teaching, or individual application which made them private instructions. The same method which the Master followed in teaching by parables, He followed in teaching by miracles.

When we study the private miracles of the Master, and put ourselves back into the conditions under which they were wrought, we are impressed, first of all, by their perfect naturalness, fitness, and adaptation to teaching. And yet these, most natural lessons of the Divine Teacher, have become stumbling-blocks to those who ignore their educational purpose, and the historical conditions under which they occurred. This class of miracles is strictly limited (a) to the education of the disciples, and (b) almost wholly limited to the schooling of the fisherman-disciples, and to the sphere of their early labors, the lake, the nets, and the fishing-boats. Moreover, within this smaller group of training-miracles for

fishermen only, there is a still smaller group devoted to the training of one man, the great-hearted, loving, blundering irrepressible Simon Peter.

Private Miracles for Private Instruction. So far as the record goes, the training of Simon began the private miracles, and the winning of Peter ended them. Every good workman knows his own trade better than an outsider. The thing which Simon the fisher knew best of all, was when to fish, where to fish, and how to fish. When a landsman stepped into Simon's boat in broad daylight and said, "Put out into the deep, and let down your nets," Simon, although he believed the speaker to be the Messiah, could not keep back the fisherman's protest, "We have toiled all the night and taken nothing." But when the amazed fisherman saw his boat filled and almost sinking with its overload of fish, he threw himself at the feet of Jesus, exclaiming, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Is there anything here save the simple lesson of Christ's superior wisdom in the one sphere where Simon had the most experience and the most confidence? Could any other educational method so quickly have made Simon a pupil in that school where catchers-of-fish were being taught to become catchers-of-men? (Luke 5:1-11.)

Later the Twelve were taught the same lesson which Christ had given Simon. But the conditions were even more impressive. (Mark 4:35-41.) The pupils, hardy fishermen, are thoroughly familiar with the lake in all of its moods. But they are overtaken by a storm more than severe. The waves are filling the boat, the Master is asleep. They awaken Him with the cry, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" He arose, rebuked the wind, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, "How is it that ye have

no faith?" The miraculous training accomplishes its purpose. The Twelve have a new faith; yes, and a *new awe*. For they said one to another, "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" From that hour the Messiah began to appear to them like unto the Strong Son of God.

It was immediately after Christ had fed the five thousand, hurried his disciples away from political contagion, and thwarted the intention of the excited multitude to make Him a political king, that He instructed the Twelve by another miraculous object lesson. (Matt. 14:24-33.) The fishermen are in the midst of the lake, struggling against contrary wind and waves, when in the dimness before dawn, they are startled by seeing a phantom walking on the waves towards their boat. Some of them cry out in terror, but across the angry waves comes the word, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."

They had failed to learn the spiritual lesson of the loaves and fishes. (Mark 6:52.) It looks as if they had sympathized with the Galileans political plans. But alone in the storm and darkness, they were taught that the power of their Messiah was not human but superhuman. Not that of a political leader, but of a Spiritual King. Was not the lesson taught the fishermen in the boat the same lesson which on the next day Christ taught the political multitude who also had eaten of His loaves and fishes? Was there any difference between these two instructions on the nature and mission of the King except in the method?

The miraculous lesson given to the boat-load of faithful yet fearful disciples was followed by a still more striking act of individual training. With that impetuosity which is so characteristic of the man, Simon Peter recognizing the voice of His Lord, forgets his spectral fears and bounds to

the extreme of self-confidence and rashness, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the water." The Master answers, "Come." And the daring disciple actually walks a few steps on the water, but alas, his confidence in his own faith is stronger than his confidence in His Lord. He turns his eyes from Christ to the storm tossed waves, and begins to sink. The Master seizes Simon's outstretched hands with the rebuke, "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" Would the rash sailor ever forget his lesson?

The Transfiguration, the greatest miracle in the life of Christ before His resurrection, is a private miracle. (Luke 9:28-36.) It occurred far away from the public gaze; it was seen only by Simon Peter, James and John. It was a marvellous object lesson in which the Son of God was the transfigured and glorified Object, and His heavenly Father was the Teacher. And what was its teaching? It was a revelation of the divine nature of their Master, a lesson of His true relation to God which they were just beginning to realize. And St. Peter filled to overflowing with the spiritual splendor of his vision, proposed a permanent camp upon the mountain top, "Not knowing what he said."

The Transfiguration, however, is more than a silent lesson. As the voice of the Father broke the solemn silence of His Son's baptism, so now it is heard amid His Son's heavenly glory. To the prostrate disciples, and especially to him who had dared to speak in this Holy of Holies, came the rebuking voice of God, "This is my beloved Son, *hear ye Him.*" Do you recall what had immediately preceded the Transfiguration? Simon hearing his Master speak of His approaching death, took it upon himself to reprove the Christ. Simon's irreverence well merited the stern rebuke, "Get thee behind me, satan." To the disciples Christ said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son

of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in His glory." (Luke 9:26.) It was only a week later that Simon (and his companions) heard the words, "This is My beloved Son, *hear ye Him!*" Think you that even Simon could forget God's schooling?

The miracle of the shekel in the fish's mouth (Matt. 17:24-27), is another part of the private instruction of Simon Peter. It was an individual lesson. Probably even the other disciples would never have known of it if honest Peter had not confessed his blunder, and the method of His Master's rebuke. The would-be leader of the Twelve had taken upon himself to answer a question which Christ Himself had not answered, namely, what is the relation of the New Kingdom to the Hebrew Church. His thoughtless answer, "Yes," my Master pays taxes to the Temple, had placed the New Kingdom, and its Divine King below, and therefore *under the authority* of the Rulers of the Temple. It was a great blunder, it deserved a great rebuke, and Simon received it the very moment he entered the Master's presence.

Simon had made himself the leader and spokesman for the Twelve and their Master. The Master puts him below all the others. He closes the Apostolic purse against Simon and his self-assumed tax. He sends him back to his old calling, back to find his old hook and line, and (like any common fisherman) earn the tax which he, without authority, had saddled upon his Master. Would not every step Simon took rub in the Master's lesson? Think you he would ever again pull in a fish without remembering the one that came up with the rebuking double drachma in his mouth?

The withering of the fig tree at the word of Christ (Matt. 21:18-22), was a private miracle, and a striking object lesson in faith. It is the only miraculous instruction which is

based on destruction, although that element is frequently found in Christ's parabolic teaching. A close parallel is found in the parable of the smitten fig tree (Luke 13: 6-9). But the lesson there has a different application.

We do not always remember that the forty days which our Lord spent on the earth after His resurrection were (a) not a part of His public ministry; were (b) wholly devoted to the *private* training of His disciples; and that (c) the relation of the risen Christ to earthly things was so changed as to make the whole period one perpetual miracle; also (d) that Christ devoted this whole period to instructing His disciples "in the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

It is perfectly natural that under these exceptional conditions the miraculous method of instruction should (for the time being) become the normal method; i. e., a method which perfectly conformed to the conditions under which Christ was living on the earth. The resurrection angel rolled the rock from the door of the sepulchre, not that Christ might rise, but that His disciples might see that He had already risen. And it was on this fact that the Angel based his instruction to the faithful women, "Fear not," "He is risen. * * * Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matt. 28: 6.)

Did Christ ever give a more vivid and abiding instruction than the one He gave to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus? (Luke 24: 13-35.) And when the action ended with the blessing and breaking of the bread, the disciples suddenly found themselves gazing with beating hearts at a broken loaf and an empty chair, was not their training completed and its lesson already learned?

When Christ at the close of the first day of the week (Luke 24: 36-43), passed through the closed and locked door

of the upper room, and appeared in the midst of His doubting and terrified disciples, He evidently used this miraculous method of entrance for the same reason that, a few minutes later, He said, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." (Luke 24: 38-40.)

And with the object lesson of the risen Saviour standing before them, could they fail to realize the wonderful fact that He had indeed risen from the dead. So when, under the same conditions, He again appeared in the same place, it is for the disciplining of one lonesome doubter. "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." (John 20: 27.) But the personal presence of the Risen Christ is enough. Thomas lifted not hand but voice, "My Lord and my God!"

While this marvelous period of instruction filled forty days its record covers only those first days during which the disciples were struggling to recover their mental balance after the shock of the crucifixion, and the rebound of the resurrection. St. Peter could not keep quiet under the strain of the situation. He felt that if he could get out on the lake, in his old fishing-boat, then he might find himself again. Suddenly he exclaimed, "I go a fishing." His old partners join him. As often before, they toil all night and catch nothing. As in other days, a voice comes across the water, Cast on the right and you shall find. As in other days, the net is filled to overflowing. But the impetuous Peter has already thrown himself into the water to reach the feet of Him who stands on the shore beside a fire of coals, of cooking fish, and waiting

loaves. But not until the Risen Lord had fed the penitent, did He discipline, and restore him. Recalling the circumstances, think you it was possible for St. Peter to forget the lesson he was taught, as he stood surrounded by his partners and the implements of his old calling? (John 21:1-17.)

It must needs be that Christ should return to the Father. Was it necessary that it should be with a visible body? Christ must ascend, but was it necessary that there should be witnesses? Or if there were witnesses, was it necessary to limit them to His own disciples? Yes, in every case; for only under these particular circumstances could the manifold unity of Christ's life, and the perfect harmony of Christ's teaching, be completed. To Him the tempter had said, "Cast thyself down," from the pinnacle of the Temple. To His faithful followers Christ said, "I will ascend to My Father and your Father." Satan desired a spectacular descent that would startle the world. That Christ might confirm the faith of those who followed Him (even after death), Christ privately appeared to them in bodily form, privately led them to a secluded place of prayer, and while He stood over them in blessing, He ascended to His Father, and their Father. Was it possible for the schooling of the disciples to close with a more abiding and inspiring lesson? (Luke 24:50-53.)

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

The chapter following is an application of Christ's basic truths to some of the moral difficulties and spiritual problems of revelation and life. Turn back to chapter III and carefully re-read it, not as one seeking again the principles of Biblical interpretation; but as one humbly seeking to understand some of the providential principles underlying God's moral government. As you read, ask yourself such questions as—If all truths are not equally important, on which ones would Christ be silent? Did He attempt to reveal all truth? Did He intend to do so? The Old Covenant has many silences, has the New, none?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TEACHING OF DIVINE SILENCE.

THE words of the Master are divine. Must not His silences be the same? The light floods the sun-dial, yet to its silent shadows we turn for information. If we study them aright, the silences of Christ are vocal with instruction, more so than any spoken words of man. The sorrow is that many do not think of studying the silences of Christ. Many approach the Divine Speaker as though they stood on His level, and were entitled to know everything that He knows. Does the King proclaim to his subjects all the affairs of his kingdom? Does the General explain to private soldiers his plan of battle?

Because the words of the Son of Man are a revelation of divine love, we rightly expect that wherever there is spiritual need, there will be spiritual information. Should we not also expect a divine silence when it is for man's good? What the true heart hungers for is "the certainty of truth," a definite vision of duty, the will to follow in loving confidence the footsteps of the Son of Man.

The Silence of Divine Certainty is the most enlightening and inspiring of the silences of the Son of Man. A person who is constantly arguing for the *basic truths* of Christianity, may believe them, yet he is not sure of them. One who is absolutely sure of the foundation truths of life, does not stop to argue about them, nor attempt to prove them. The profound silences of the Divine Teacher concern the basic truths

of religion; i. e., *those first truths which must be* in order that any truth whatsoever may be. For the Master the first and greatest truths of life were forever settled.

Christ never uttered a word to prove the existence of God. It was impossible for Him to do so. His whole teaching is built upon His absolute certainty that God is His Father, and the Father of all who listen to His words. *He takes it for granted* that His hearers, having been created in God's image, and made partakers of His spiritual nature, are capable of knowing God; not intellectually, but intuitively, morally, and spiritually. Moreover, Our Lord unhesitatingly assumes the perfect goodness, and absolute holiness of God. With equal certainty He takes it for granted that man possesses a fallen and sinful nature, that he needs God's forgiveness, that he needs God's help in obtaining it, and that the Heavenly Father is willing and waiting to supply His children's every need.

Moreover, the above teaching of Christ is based upon the *unargued truth* that in the possession of a like moral nature, the Holy Father and His sinful child, have a common meeting ground; a common understanding of good and evil, of right and wrong, of holiness and wickedness, and that man is free to choose the one and reject the other. Christ's every appeal to man is based upon these unargued spiritual facts. And He appeals to the wayward and sinful not as an object of divine hate, but of divine love. He silently affirms the essential truthfulness of the Hebrew Prophets idea of atonement, and announces that He has come to lay down His life for the salvation of the lost.

As the Son of Man never attempts to prove man's origin, so He never argues about man's destiny. He silently accepts the spiritual fact that man's origin decides his destiny; that

as man possesses moral freedom and an immortal nature his moral responsibility does not end with his earthly body, but is as limitless as his immortality. Moreover, Christ silently assumes that man is capable of living his present life well without a full revelation of the life of the world to come; and that the spiritual certainty of an endless existence, and the spiritual certainty that man will in justice and mercy reap whatever he has sown, is all that man actually needs upon which to build for time and for eternity.

The Silence that Approves or Permits pervades all the teaching of the Master. It is a silence which the careless reader usually fails to notice; or, because he is ignorant of the historic conditions under which Christ remained silent, he utterly misinterprets it. Too often his theory is, Christ did not sanction this custom or conduct, therefore He condemns it.

He is indeed a careless student who fails to realize that the Master lived and taught in an age of religious error, and among a people debased by false teachers. No prophet was so fearless in rebuking sin as Jesus of Nazareth. No moral or religious error came under His eye and escaped His rebuke; no false teacher ever entered His presence without receiving His unmistakable condemnation. But to make the Master's words and the Master's silences both mean condemnation, would require a complete reversal of the actual historic conditions under which He taught. There are, however, thousands of matters belonging to man's daily life which the Master neither sanctioned nor condemned. They are too petty to come within the range of divine teaching. They belong to the realm of conscience, and common sense. They are a part of man's moral freedom for which he must give an account; or they are fully covered by those great spiritual principles

of life, which form the larger part of the Master's teaching.

Christ came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. This truth is central in all His words and deeds. Yet the very fact that the Old Testament *needed fulfilment* proved its incompleteness. With deepest reverence for the ancient revelation, the Son does not hesitate to teach that it is incomplete both in moral standards, and spiritual revelation. He condemned the old law of revenge. He measured by a higher standard the old precepts relating to divorce and adultery. His measure of righteousness was not the letter of the Law, nor the righteousness of deeds alone, but the inward righteousness of the heart.

Yet of the larger portion of the ancient revelation, its history, law, and prophecy, Christ said nothing. Did He condemn all the ancient Scripture which He failed to approve? Did He approve all which He failed to condemn? Or, what is more vital, did His silence find its full voice in the perfect moral standards, and final spiritual revelation of His own words and life!

The Silence that Gives Moral Freedom. We cannot approach our Lord's words in humility without realizing that by far the larger portion of them are devoted to teaching not the rules, but the principles of life in His Kingdom. *Principles* are perpetual and universal; rules are temporary and local. Principles are vital, they apply to all persons, all cases, and all conditions; rules are for particular persons, certain classes, or special conditions. Loyalty to principle is the freedom of the mature mind. The observance of rules is the safety of childhood.

Yet there are persons of mature years who fault the teaching of Christ because He refuses to treat them like children, because He is silent concerning minute rules and precepts for

the regulation of daily conduct. They seem to think that the silences of the Gospel are imperfections, and that the Master's teaching should have followed the lines of the book of Leviticus, or the Proverbs of Solomon. They desire not the guidance of living principles, but a pocket dictionary of moral conduct.

The aim of the Master's teaching is to produce a self-governing soul. His method is to plant in the heart of His hearers the changeless principles of His Kingdom. His silence as to rules of conduct is deliberate. It is in harmony with the whole body of His teaching. Principles are incentives. They demand thought; they compel and reward study; and the reward is development in spiritual understanding and growth in moral freedom.

Yet a helpful Christian life without definite rules is an impossibility. But a man's rules must come from himself, not from another. They must be *his own application* of the principles which Christ has given him. The Christian man demands from his life perfect loyalty, not to the rules of other men, but to the principles of Jesus Christ, and he accords to others that perfect freedom in Christ which he claims for himself.

The Silence that Creates Hope. Beyond all men the Divine Teacher knew man. He knew man's strength, and his weakness. Knew man's healthy desire to understand what he ought to know, and man's morbid curiosity to discover whatever was concealed by the veil of silence. Because of His perfect knowledge the Master was deliberately silent concerning the things which man has always been the *most curious* to know.

The desire to pry into the future, to be assured of safety, or success, of fortune or misfortune, is an universal weakness.

At the time of Christ, and long before it, divination was a chief factor in all man-made religions.

“ The curse is universal ; high and low
Are mad alike the future hour to know.”

The words of the ancient heathen satirist are a picture of modern life. Religious impostors, seers, quacks, and cheats still find ready buyers for their widely advertised wares. The hidden mysteries of the books of Daniel and Revelation have more fascination for some Christians, than the simplest and tenderest teachings of the Gospels. The time of His second advent Christ refused to reveal. But the weakness and rashness of man has gone behind divine silence and again and again fixed the day and hour of the Lord's return.

The Apostles were not free from the universal weakness. They glory in the greatness of the Temple. The Master answers, “ Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Later they privately say, “ Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world ? ” The Master's answer is a most solemn warning. (Study Matt. 24: 4-51.)

The silence of Christ is the expressed love of Christ. In every age of man the soul has found its highest inspiration in the certainty of faith, and the joy of hope. The certainty of possession is the destruction of enthusiasm, and the joy of effort. The certainty of failure, lingering disease or death (without the confidence of a certain faith) is driving thousands to despair. It is what a man believes and “ hopes for ” that nerves him to wrest victory from defeat. It is the Master's silences that create hope. It is the certainty that “ Christ's concealing is Love's revealing ” that inspires the Christian sufferer and the Christian worker.

The Silence of Providential Care is one to which the Master Himself calls our attention. The Son of Man is Himself the expression of God's providential activity. Do you recall where He first manifested what man calls providential care? Not in the Temple of God, nor in the Capitol of Judea, but at a social gathering in an insignificant village. It was to save from shame an unknown bridegroom and his guests that the Son of Man first used the divine power of His providential office. The unknown director of the feast complimented the unnamed bridegroom on his wine, but neither he who complimented, nor he who was complimented knew the source of the gift.

A few hours walk from Cana, a mother who had already buried her husband, is preparing to bury her only son. She had wept, and prayed, but no answer had come—except death. Doubtless God's providential care seemed a long way off; perhaps the mere echo of an hopeless cry. Yet between the city gate and the grave, One whom the weeping mother saw not and knew not, stopped the procession of death and restored to life and love the son that was dead. But that son must die again. Would it have been a *less* manifestation of providential care if the restoration had taken place at the gate of that city where there is no death?

The mother at the gate of Nain knew not the Christ nor His providential presence. The mother at the gate of Tyre knew Him and besought His help. His answer was—silence. Even the disciples wanted to grant her request and stop her cries. Yet, *in the end*, did the divine silence add to the mother's sorrow or the mother's blessing? If divine delay means a larger blessing here, would a longer silence have meant a smaller blessing hereafter?

In distant Perea the Son of Man received this message from

Bethany, "He whom thou lovest is sick." Yet, Lazarus is allowed to die, and the sisters to remain in silence and sorrow. To-day we know why Jesus was silent and absent. But if we did not know, if the silence of a few days had become the silence of centuries, would it have changed the fact of God's providential care? Does the existence of God's loving care depend upon our understanding it?

"Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" All his life had the beggar awaited in silence and darkness for an answer to that question. And the joy of Christ's answer came to his ears, the light of gladness came to his eyes, and the blessed vision of the Messiah came to his heart, all in one day. We know from Christ Himself, that the death of Lazarus, and the blindness of the beggar were "for the glory of God." But were their afflictions the only ones that are for God's glory? Does the fact that *we know why* they suffered make their cases providentially different from those which are still covered by the veil of divine silence? Has any affliction ever fallen upon man that was not *in the will of the Father* both for man's good and God's glory? A study of these Christ-interpreted cases will help us to understand like cases from which the Master has not lifted the curtain of silence.

"Suppose ye that these Galileans (whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices) were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:2, 3.) Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He

not much more clothe you? O ye of little faith!" (Matt. 6: 26-30.) "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt. 7: 11.) And remember that everything is "good" by which man is blessed, and God is glorified. And these two are one. Nothing is for God's glory that is not for man's eternal good.

The Silence of That Trains. It is recorded of the holy child Jesus that "He increased in wisdom and stature." His body grew, and His mind developed like those of any other normal child. St. Paul also says, "When I was a child, I thought as a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child." In other words, what the boy from Nazareth or the boy from Tarsus was able to receive or do physically, mentally, or spiritually was decided *by childhood's* limitations. "But," adds St. Paul, "When I became a man I put away childish things." Henceforth, he was free from the limitations of childhood. But was he free from all limitations? Was the freedom of his manhood limitless? Did he possess any such power or freedom as Jesus of Nazareth possessed when He reached manhood?

The limitations of adult years are just as fixed as those of childhood. We may forget this, but Christ is too wise and too loving to do so. He holds no man responsible for anything outside of his limitations. He condemns no man for not possessing or using a knowledge which he never received. For "He giveth" to every man according to his several ability. Human capacity to receive and use measures the gifts of Divine Love.

We know that throughout the Old Testament there is a gradual revelation of God's purpose as man is able to bear it.

Out of an eternal silence, God is seen and heard mainly in His works. Primitive man, a child in God's kindergarten, handles earthly objects made by the Creator and is gradually trained to think "Creator", hear his Creator, obey his Creator, and dimly understand his Creator. In other words, all revelation is mercifully adapted to human limitations.

"My Father worketh hitherto and I work." The method of the Father is the method of the Son. "My time is not yet come" is the Master's all sufficient answer for His silences and His seeming inactivity. Nothing is spoken or done before the time. All that is needful is revealed at the time. Warning His disciples of coming persecutions, the Master says, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." (Matt. 10:19.) The perfect adaptation of revelation to human needs is the foundation of man's moral and spiritual training under both Covenants.

Few men realize their own limitations, or even those common to all humanity. We are constantly asking our Lord to give us more light, more responsibility, than we are prepared to receive. And such requests come not from the largeness of our knowledge, but from the largeness of our ignorance. Even some of the Apostles showed the same weakness, and what is more surprising, did so after three years in the training-school of Christ.

The sons of Zebedee actually believed themselves fitted for the highest places in the Kingdom; they imagined that they had the capacity to receive the hidden things of God. (Mark 11:35.) Sadly the Master answers, "Ye know not what ye ask." To-day there are men who fault God's laws of physical government; yes, men who are so ignorant as to imagine that

they are capable of improving God's moral government of the world!

The silences of the Master are an essential part of man's moral training, they are always educational. It is our doing the Lord's will to-day that prepares us to understand to-morrow's words, or to-morrow's silences. It was at the end of His ministry that the Son of Man said to the eager and expectant Apostles, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." "What I do, thou knowest not now. But thou shalt know hereafter." Cannot we trust the silences of Love?

CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES.

We have come to the final chapter. In one sense it is a review of the book, not as to its details, but in its relation to the supreme purpose for which Christ came to earth. *Picture* Christ at Cana, and in feeding the 5,000. In what do these acts find their supreme importance? What is the very heart of the parable of the "Lost Sheep"? Do you understand Christ's denunciations in Matt. 23? Why such severity? How did Christ save Simon Peter? (John 21 : 1-17). Do you understand the story of Lazarus? Re-read it, explaining each step's meaning.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW CHRIST REVEALS GOD TO MAN.

“HE that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” What mean these words of the Son of Man? “I am a poor man,” Carlyle is reported to have said in a conversation with Holman Hunt, “but I can say in serious truth, that I would give one third of all I possess for a veritable contemporaneous representation of Jesus Christ.” But would the picture have satisfied him? We gaze intently at the silhouette of an ancient hero, but it does not satisfy us. It is only the black shadow of a dead face. We examine the photograph of a noble king and deliverer with more interest; yet we are not content. With still deeper interest we study from every side the deliverer’s statue. Yet none of these things satisfy us; they only increase our regret that we never saw the living man. And even when a descendant of the king is pointed out to us as “the very image” of his great ancestor, we turn from all external resemblances to ask, Is he the image of him in mind and character? Does he possess the same heroic ideals, the same humility, the same grand personality? There is but one answer to such a question.—“Only a child expects impossibilities.” And yet, when St. John leaned upon the breast and looked into the face of Jesus of Nazareth, he saw God.

How Man Sees God. “Jesus is God spelling Himself out in language that man can understand.” Man once talked with

God and understood Him. But man left his home, his native land, his Father's house. The more he wandered from home the more he forgot the mother tongue of prayer; and the more he failed to understand the *meaning* of his Father's answers. In despair he prayed for an Interpreter. His Father sent One from the old Eden home. The Interpreter had to speak the language of earth, but He lived the life of Eden. His life interpreted His words. His life interpreted His Father's words, and made man again hear His Father's voice, again feel His Father's love. For the Interpreter had come from God, to live the life of God, to do the work of God; that all who accepted His words, and His life, should in seeing Him, see God. For every word of the Son is the word of the Father, every work of the Son is the work of the Father, and every revelation of the Son is the revelation of the Father.

You have tried to think of God, to realize all that God is. Have you ever succeeded? Have you ever partially succeeded? Jesus of Nazareth is the perfect realization of our highest possible ideal of God. Can you conceive of anything that you would take out of the life of Christ to make it more Godlike? Can you conceive of anything you would add to His personality to make it more supremely the perfect manifestation of God? No. In the Person of the Christ we see God. In the love of Christ, we see the love of the Father. And in the sacrifice of Christ we realize the heart of the Father.

Man Seeing God Create. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." "The works that I do are not Mine but the works of Him that sent me." In the miracle at Cana of Galilee I see in human form, the invisible Maker of heaven and earth continuing His work. It is His creative voice I hear saying, "Fill the water pots with water. Draw out now

and bear unto the governor of the feast." On the Galilean lake I stand trembling amid the frightened disciples in the storm-tossed ship. But in the lifting up of the face of Jesus I feel the Spirit of God again moving on the face of the waters. And in the words "Peace, be still," I recognize the voice of Him who said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so." (Gen. 1:9.)

I stand in a desert place amid thronging thousands, and like them I am faint with hunger. I hear the words of divine command. "Cause the men to sit down." I see the Son of Man take the lad's little loaves and fishes, and as I see their broken fragments increase until great multitudes have been satisfied, I hear again the voice of God; and the obedient earth brings forth seed after its kind, and the answering waters bring forth fish after their kind, and satisfied man, marvelling at the goodness of what was created, praises the power of the Creator.

Again in the Synagogue of Nazareth, I listen to One who proclaims that His life-work is to heal broken hearts, open sightless eyes, unstop deaf ears, and liberate the slaves of sin. And in His words I hear the voice of Him who created eye, and ear and heart, and has come down to earth that He might restore what man had broken and destroyed. And when I follow Him into the homes of suffering and hovels of despair, when I see that the touch of His hand brings sight to the blind, strength to the shrivelled arms, and broken limbs; when I see the repulsive and despairing leper healed by His touch, and see the dead child hearing His voice, return to life and gladness; then I know that it is the voice of the Creator that has spoken the word of life, and the "finger of God" that has touched the dying and the dead.

Man Seeing the Love of God. When Jesus, with the creative power of the Father, has fed the fainting thousands and restored to health their diseased bodies, afterward turns from a clamoring world and a waiting Kingdom to take into His arms and bless a little child, then I see not the measureless might of the Creator, but the measureless love of the Father's heart hovering over His little ones to protect and bless. And upon my ears fall the words, "If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." (Matt. 18:12-14.) And in the words of the Son I hear the voice of the Father, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me. (Matt. 18:5.) I look upon Him who speaks, and I see not a man from Nazareth, but a vision of the heart of God, whose tenderness is like unto that of a little child.

And in this vision of the tender heart of the All-Father, I understand the most terrible words that ever passed the lips of Divine Love. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. (Matt. 23:13.) For, as with fear and trembling, I gaze into the face of the Speaker (white with the awful power of His emotion), trying to understand that terrible intensity which fascinates, yet frightens me, there is a pause,—the voice breaks into a tear-filled cry; the cry of God's motherhood, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent

unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not!*" (Matt. 23:37.) Then I know that these words of woe are the voice of God's love and tenderness for His children; who, seeking their Father's face are being kept out of His Kingdom, robbed of their heritage, and trained in hypocrisy by the very teachers who were appointed to bring them home to God.

So, in Jesus' love for sinners, I see, not the love of a man for his fellows, but the love of the Father seeking His own children. So, when, in the dusty highway of Jericho, I see Jesus stopping under a sycamore tree to call to Him the chief of despised publicans, I hear the voice of the Father pleading for a sinful son's return. In the words of Zaccheus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold," (Luke 19:8), I recognize the voice of a happy child who has found his Father's House. And in the words, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9), I hear the loving voice of God who had gone out of His way to help the prodigal to return to His Father.

Now understand I why the Father and Shepherd of souls cannot rest when one of His flock is lost; and why, when He hath found the lost one He gathereth him into His arms or layeth him upon His shoulders and feels not the burden for the greatness of His joy. And later when I hear the scornful words, "Behold, the friend of publicans and sinners!" I know that they come to the ears of the Father as sweet music, and that He saith to His angels, "Rejoice with me! for I have found my child which was lost."

Man Seeing God Forgive. How wide is the gulf between divine and human forgiveness I hear in the words of the

Son of Man. "A certain king would take account of his servants." (Matt. 18:24-28.) One owes his Master an amount too vast for a lifetime to discharge, and his Master forgives the whole debt; and yet this debtor who was forgiven a debt of millions, seeks a fellow-servant owing him a few dollars, and casts him into prison until he shall pay every penny. It is only the greatest soul that knows how to forgive. Nowhere do I see so vividly the greatness of God as in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

At Capernaum I stand within the courtyard of a house crowded with eager listeners, there is an interruption. Then these words fall upon my ears, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." And I hear in these words, not the voice of man, but the voice of God speaking to a sin-burdened child the words he most needed to hear, the forgiveness which only God can give. It is out of their hard and unforgiving hearts that the Scribes and Pharisees cry, "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? (Luke 5:21.)

Reclining in the house of Simon the Pharisee, I listen to the words of an invited guest, "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" "Simon, seest thou this woman? * * * "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke 7:41-47). When the guests exclaim, "Who is this that forgivest sins?" I am not surprised. For when I heard the words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," I knew that I was listening to the voice of the Father of all mercies.

Later I see One in Jerusalem surrounded by the public teachers of the Holy City. I see Him calmly writing in the dust. Then as He suddenly faces His questioners, I hear

the words "He that is without sin among you, let *him* first cast a stone at her." (John 8:7.) Then, condemned and driven away by their own conscience, He who wrote in the dust said, "Go and sin no more," and again I recognize the voice of God that I heard in the house of Simon.

In the early morning mist I stand upon a desert shore of the Galilean lake. I see the Son of Man looking upon a grievous sinner. It is not one whose bones are full of his father's sins. It is not a publican, a Samaritan, or an ignorant sinner. It is one of His own chosen Apostles, one to whom He has given His fullest confidence, His tenderest love. Yet one who, in the hour of his Lord's greatest need, most basely denied and deserted Him. To this one I hear Him say, "Lovest thou me?" (In my heart I answer, No, Lord, he does not. He bragged of his loyalty, and then, at the first temptation he basely denied Thee.) His forgiving Lord replies, "Feed my lambs." Again I hear His words, "Lovest thou me?" (Again to myself I answered, No, Lord, he has proved that he does not love Thee. He vehemently denied Thee a second time.) The same forgiving voice again replies, "Feed my sheep." Once more I hear the words, "Lovest thou Me?" (Once more my hard heart answers, Lord, Thou knowest he does not love Thee, Thou knowest that he denied Thee thrice, even with lies and cursings.) It is the same voice of forgiving love that replies, "Feed My sheep." (Then my sinful self, condemned and trembling, cries, One only can thus forgive! I have heard the voice of God, The voice of Him who alone can forgive *me*.)

Once more, in the gathering darkness, I see One rising from His knees to face a band that has come to murder Him. A disciple defends his Teacher, and one of the hireling band loses his ear. But, (with loving pity,) He, whom they would

murder, touches the wound and restores the ear. Later, I see the Restorer standing before the High Priest. The hands that have healed and comforted so many, are cruelly bound. I see a member of the murderous band smite Him because He speaks the truth, while others mock Him, and contemptuously spit upon Him. Yet the Innocent One endures it all with the silence of His great forgiveness. I see Him surrounded by a band of brutal soldiers, He is clothed in a royal robe, a crown of thorns is pressed upon His bleeding brow, a reed is put into His hand, and kneeling before Him, His mockers cry, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And the Innocent One in the greatness of His love, breaks not His silence.

Finally I see the Sinless One—unjustly condemned to die—bearing His cross towards Calvary. I hear Him break His silence to comfort those who weep for Him. Then, like a malefactor, He is hurried to His doom. I draw near; the soldiers are preparing to nail their prisoner to the cross. But He who is about to die utters no cry, a lamb in the hands of his shearers is not more dumb. I stop my ears against the cruel blows of the hammer. As He, silent and motionless, is lifted up above the people I hear no cry, but a prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The hour of death draws near. He turns His face towards a penitent robber, I hear these words, "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Then know I that His is a forgiveness greater than man can measure or comprehend. I know that I have heard and seen what passeth all understanding—the very love of God.

Seeing God quench Man's Tears. In the presence of death words become empty and meaningless. Silent sympathy is stronger than vehement words. The service of unspoken love is the voice that brings comfort. In the house of Jairus pro-

fessional mourners are mocking deepest sorrow with loudest noise. Christ of Nazareth enters, and sweet silence reigns. I see the tears of the father and mother cease as Jesus gently lifts the small white hand of their dead child. I hear His loving words, "Little Lamb, awake!" And as the little maid rises from her couch, and turns her questioning eyes from the loving face bending over her to the faces of her father and mother, I see all tears quenched, save those of gladness. And when to the parents, awe-struck and trembling in the greatness of their joy, One says, "Give her to eat," I know it is the voice of Him, who in the beginning said, "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."

He whom Jesus loved is dead. The sorrowing Martha goes out to meet her friend. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." The voice of the Resurrection answers: "Thy brother shall rise again." Then comes Mary full of tears. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." "Jesus wept." Standing before the tomb I hear strange words spoken to dead and offensive matter, "Lazarus, come forth!" And as I gaze into the darkness I see him that was dead struggling to walk forth in his grave bands. Then I know that I have heard the voice of God saying (as "in the beginning") Let life come from the dust of the ground, and it was so. And as I see on every face, tears turn into joy and gladness, I know that I have a vision of the end, when "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Rev. 7: 16, 17.)

As I recall all that I have seen and heard while following

the footsteps of the Son of Man, I am sure that I have been given a vision of the invisible God; of the Creator continuing His creative work; of the Father, who is Love, loving and forgiving the sinner to save him; loving the outcast and the despairing to exalt him; loving the mourner to turn his sorrow into joy. Yet whenever I try to think of God, I find myself thinking of the Son of Man, and in every feature of His character I see realized my highest ideal of God. When I try to conceive of the Person of God, there rises before me the Person of One "Who went about doing good." When I struggle to understand Him to whom we say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven," there rises before me a vision of One in whose arms are little children, about whose feet are gathered the lambs of His flock, and who in the joy of His measureless love, says, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

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